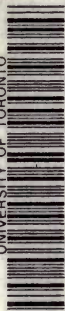


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THE BARHAM PAPERS

VOL. II.



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INTRODUCTION

THIS Second Volume of the 'Barham Papers' differs from the First in being, to a very great extent, the composition of Middleton himself. It consists mainly of—1, crude memoranda, notes for conversation or letters; 2, sketches of reports, referring, for the most part, to the work of the navy board, and intended, sooner or later, for the commission of enquiry; and 3, rough copies of letters which, if they exist in any other form, must be looked for among the papers of Middleton's correspondents. To only one collection of these have we access—the 'Chatham Papers,' now, by the generous bequest of the late Rear-Admiral J. Eliot Pringle, in the Public Record Office—where Middleton's letters to Pitt may be found, under the reference *Chatham Papers*, III. But the drafts of these and of a great many others are in the boxes lent to the Society by the Earl of Gainsborough. Nearly all these drafts or rough copies

are autographs, and it may seem extraordinary that an extremely busy man, so oppressed with work as Middleton certainly was, should be at the pains of writing rough copies of so many of his letters. No doubt he wrote off-hand very many, of which no record remains, and the drafts of some appear rather as memoranda; but of a great many, the draft is so far unintentional that, beginning as a letter, it was changed about the sixth line into a rough copy, and finished in a very difficult scribble, with a great many deletions, interlineations and transpositions, which make the interpretation of it more like deciphering a cryptogram than reading a MS. It is believed, however, that, as here printed, the text is virtually correct. These drafts are commonly dated, if only by way of endorsement, but the memoranda and reports are rarely so; and though the date is often indicated with sufficient clearness, it is often more or less vague, and not unfrequently quite obscure. A ? prefixed to the date is meant to signify 'probably about,' rather than a suggestion that the date is as given.

At the first, we have a very extraordinary series of letters to Lord Sandwich, the first lord of the admiralty, whose perversion of the vast power which the office gave him has often been noted, and certainly was often expounded to Sandwich himself, in no friendly spirit. It is not too much to say that by no one has the patronage of the first lord been so abused as it was by Sandwich, and that by that abuse the navy was reduced to the lowest pitch. It was this that brought to Captain

Baillie¹ a legacy of 500*l.*, as a small token of the donor's approbation of his 'endeavours to rescue Greenwich Hospital from the rapacious hands of the basest of mankind'; and this was before the war favoured the rascality that pervaded the department and depleted the stores. There was no suspicion that Sandwich himself was in any way guilty of fraud, or sold appointments or contracts for money; but it scarcely admits of doubt that his mistress, Miss Ray, did; and there is no doubt at all that he disposed of several for votes and party influence—an abuse of patronage which was very far-reaching and descended to the lowest depths, so as to lead us to suppose that (p. 24) John Smart, aged 63, had a vote and that John Morse, aged 34, had not.²

The remarkable point in Middleton's letters is the plainness with which they urge on Sandwich, not indeed the corruption, but the bad effects almost certain to follow the abuse of patronage and the ill-judged appointments that were made in the dock-yards. We have before us no evidence that similar corruption pervaded the war office, but the letters to Lord Keppel and others, and especially to Lord George Germain (pp. 44 *seq.*), tell of the astounding ignorance which directed the victualling and transport of the troops after the war, and help us to understand the general mismanagement of the war itself.

Laforey's letters deal mostly with the very difficult position in which a commissioner of the

¹ See *D.N.B.*, *s.n.* Baillie, Thomas.

² See *D.N.B.*, *s.n.* Montagu, John, 4th Earl of Sandwich.

navy at an outport might be placed by the carelessness or greed of his superiors. That an executive officer should be appointed in a civil capacity was in itself an anomaly, which originated before the lists of executive officers, in their relative rank, were framed; but that an officer, in this position, should be ordered to exercise military command, without a military commission, was an insult to himself and to the navy at large, though it was probably considered only an ingenious device for getting a man to command at the port without giving him a share in any possible prize money.

Laforey's later letters refer to the notorious flag-promotion of 1787,¹ which is also the subject of a letter from Middleton to Pitt (p. 258). In this case Lord Howe's decision was overruled at once, and Middleton got his flag; but of the steps by which this was accomplished we know little, except that Pitt did interfere, and that Howe, with much chagrin, was obliged to give way. Middleton, writing to Wilberforce, 26th September, 1787,² says—

'I am perfectly satisfied with [Mr. Pitt's] intentions towards me; and having produced a precedent of an admiral serving as a comptroller, it will, I believe, be acquiesced in. This office, in its present state, is too much for anyone to manage; but as Mr. Pitt is sensible how necessary it is to have a person used to business in it, and prefers me, I shall certainly do what I can. . . . My continuing here is fixed.'

¹ *Parliamentary History*, 1788; Schomberg's *Naval Chronology*, ii. 169–82.

² *Correspondence of William Wilberforce*, i. 42.

This seems partly to explain the reason of the interference ; but Pitt's letter, also to Wilberforce, of 28th June, 1788,¹ hints at, without explaining, the mode in which it operated :

‘ You will not be much surprised [to hear] that Lord Howe and his friend Brett are to quit the Admiralty as soon as the session closes. The cause (though its effects have slept so long) is what passed last summer respecting the promotion of Sir Charles Middleton. . . . Lord Howe's successor must be a landman, as there is no seaman who is altogether fit for the first place at that board.’

But Middleton's relations with Lord Howe had been strained all along. Middleton had a high sense of his own knowledge and experience, and was prone to give advice, which Howe, as his senior and superior, did not want and did not relish. There was no actual quarrel—which indeed we cannot suppose that Howe would have tolerated—but from the very beginning there appears a coldness and a polite impertinence on Howe's part, which may surprise those who remember only Brenton's charge,² that the mutinies of 1797 were largely due to the laxity of Howe's discipline in 1793-4 ; but are quite consonant with the general opinion of his cold, unsympathetic rule while at the admiralty, and in accordance with the opinion of the pamphleteer who described him as ‘unfeeling in his nature, ungracious in his manner, and with

¹ *Private Papers of William Wilberforce*, p. 22.

² *Naval History*, i. 414.

a wonderful attachment to the dictates of his own perverse, impenetrable disposition.'¹ It was, of course, his private resentment at Howe's domineering coldness, which he could not help contrasting with the easy familiarity of Sandwich, that inspired Middleton's very remarkable letters of January and February 1789 (pp. 315-9).

But a very large portion of the volume is filled with memoranda and draft reports of the state of the navy office, intended to be finally laid before the commission of enquiry, which appears, in fact, to have been mainly guided by them. As the work of the navy board has been veiled in much mystery, and by no means always accorded with its prescribed line of action, this account of it by a man who knew the whole system, both as it was supposed to be and as it really was, with the experience of ten years' war and peace, is an original and valuable contribution to the inner history of our navy.

An interesting interlude in this is offered by the several details, active and suggested, of the Dutch armament (pp. 260-80), in itself a very marked instance of the silent working of sea-power; but as the end was gained without any breach of the peace, it has passed unnoticed in our popular histories, or at most with a very casual mention.

It is unnecessary to dwell here on the intrigues by which France had induced the democratic party of Holland, which called itself the Patriots, and had attained a temporary majority, to coerce the government in 1780, and virtually to force on the war with England. The stadholder, William V., son of an

¹ See *D.N.B.* *s.n.* Howe, Richard, Earl Howe.

English mother and first cousin of the English king, was extremely averse from this policy, and though of too feeble, irresolute, and sluggish a character and temperament to lend himself to active measures against it, he had—or rather was believed by the Patriots to have—prevented the action of the fleet in the summer and autumn of 1782. A short notice of what they had wished will make the position of parties somewhat clearer.

The French ambassador at the Hague, the Marquis de V^{er}ac, had been urgent that, in the absence of the English fleet, the Dutch should undertake some active operations in the North Sea. On the 7th July, in accordance with the vote of the States General, a squadron of nineteen ships put to sea to convoy the East India trade as far as the Orkneys, with instructions, on its return, to raid the coast of England and to make havoc with the English trade from the Baltic; against all which, indeed, Middleton had previously urged timely preparations (pp. 38, 57), though the resources of our admiralty were not equal to making them to the extent he wished. From the Orkneys the squadron returned to the Dutch coast, and while V^{er}ac was urging that an attack on the Downs was quite feasible—though what was to be done there does not appear—a gale on the 6th August caused such damage to the ships that a few days later they came within the Texel for repairs.

The Patriots at Amsterdam, where they were in greatest strength, were furious; they burnt the admiral in effigy, and clamoured loudly for an investigation into the character and conduct of the

stadholder. As a compromise, Vêrac proposed that they should send a squadron to Brest, there to winter, and either to act with the French fleet, as occasion arose and as of course the French would have preferred, or to look out for the English West India trade. William, however, was in no hurry to act on the French dictation, or to attack the Downs, which he possibly knew could do no good, though Vêrac assured him that the English fleet had sailed for Gibraltar. On the 3rd October the States General approved of the sending a squadron to Brest (five ships of 64 guns, four of 56, two frigates, and a cutter) under Count van Bylandt, with a definite order to sail before the 8th. But the officers in a body, with Bylandt at their head, refused to do so, alleging that the ships were not fit for the voyage, and that they were destitute of stores and provisions.

William accepted their statement, which the Patriots did not believe; and thus no support from Holland was sent to the French fleet. Naturally the French were annoyed; but after the relief of Gibraltar in face of their own fleet and after the skirmish off Cape Spartel, they could not say much. Still, Vêrac worked on the Patriots, who became more bitter than ever against the stadholder, and their discontent assumed a noisy and bellicose attitude. There was much agitation, which it was apparently hoped would drive William into resigning. The States General passed a resolution depriving him of his constitutional power as general and admiral—commander-in-chief of the land and sea forces. It is possible that William would have accepted this, out of sheer laziness or indifference; but his wife,

the Princess Wilhelmina, refused to let her husband be shelved or deprived of his legal authority in this way, and appealed to her uncle, Frederick the Great. But Frederick, who was now an old man and wished to end his days in peace, rather threw cold water on her complaints, advising a conciliatory policy towards the Patriots, and, in his detestation of England, the acceptance of the French Protectorate. The Princess Wilhelmina would not agree to this, and the questions at issue were still unsettled when Frederick died—17th August, 1786.

He was succeeded by his nephew, Frederick William II., the brother of the Princess Wilhelmina, whose hopes revived. There was at least a possibility that the new king might interfere in her behalf, though French influence at his court was strong to prevent it; and an attack from Austria, with which Russia was closely allied, was a contingency so possible, and even probable, that in face of it nothing could be ventured. But one day towards the end of June, 1787, the Princess Wilhelmina left Nimwegen, where the court then was, intending to go to the Hague and there to exert her personal influence on the populace—to cause a dangerous riot, as the Patriots said, and certainly to strengthen the party opposed to them. At the frontier of Holland she was stopped by a military post, in charge of a subaltern officer, who refused to allow her to proceed, referring her to the States' commissioners sitting at Woerden. From them she could get no redress, but was advised to go back to Nimwegen. As she refused to do this, and was not allowed to go to the Hague, nor yet to

Gouda, which she offered as an alternative, she was eventually conducted, under a military guard, to Schooneven, and there left.

Frederick William could not quietly submit to this insult to his sister ; but the French, beginning the formation of a camp at Givet, announced their purpose of supporting the Patriots, and preventing the hostile interference of any foreign power. For the last eight years the English government had deplored the ascendancy of the Patriots, who had always formed the French party, in opposition to the aristocratic or English party ; and whilst feeling the difficulty of meddling in the domestic affairs of Holland and the Seven Provinces, felt none in preventing or attempting to prevent the hostile interference of a foreign power. On the 16th September it was officially announced to the English government that France would not allow any foreign intervention against the Patriots, which in effect was answered on the 22nd by the order for several ships to be commissioned and for others to be brought forward ; at the same time a despatch was sent to the ambassador at Berlin instructing him to conclude a definite understanding on this point with Prussia.

France had believed that the threat of the camp at Givet would be sufficient to tie the hands of Prussia, and ordered a naval equipment to counter-balance that of England ; but the muster at the camp, as afterwards the equipment of the ships, was conducted in a very half-hearted way ; and when, at the critical moment, the Sultan of Turkey declared war upon Russia, which Austria was obliged to

support, Frederick William, freed from the Eastern menace, ordered his troops to advance.

The Prussian army, under the command of the Duke of Brunswick, crossed the frontier on the 13th September, and marching leisurely through the country, occupying the towns on the way and driving the leaders of the Patriots before them, arrived in front of Amsterdam by the end of the month. After several days' negotiation and a nominal siege, it surrendered, on severe terms, on the 10th October. The leaders of the Patriots were banished the country, and most of them sought refuge in France; among them, John de Witt, a descendant, presumably, of England's great antagonist, the grand pensionary of the seventeenth century, and the ancestor of Pierre de Witt, the son-in-law of Guizot, and author of a history of the rebellion. The stadholder recovered his former power, privileges, and authority; the English government resumed its former protectorate, and the French government, declaring that—

‘The intention of His Christian Majesty, not being, and never having been to interfere by force in the affairs of the Republic of the United Provinces, the communication made to the court of London on the 16th September had no other object than to announce to that court an intention, the motives of which no longer exist’¹—

¹ The fuller history of the whole episode may be read in Hunt's *Political History of England*, 1760–1801, pp. 299, 300; *The Annual Register*, 1787; and from the opposite point of view, Coquille, *L'Alliance Franco-Hollandaise contre l'Angleterre*; Pierre de Witt, *Une Invasion Prussienne en Hollande*.

proposed that the maritime armament might be stopped ; and by mutual agreement it was stopped on the 27th October. To Europe at large it appeared that France had quailed before the threat of the Prussian army, and the Emperor Joseph said openly—‘ France has fallen : I doubt if she will ever rise again.’ Others, with a fuller knowledge of the inner working of the crisis, saw that the more alarming threat was the English navy ; and Suffren, who had been appointed to command the French fleet, wrote to a friend ¹—

‘ Well, we have secured peace indeed, but by the most cowardly abandoning of our friends, the Dutch, who, after this, will be our most bitter enemies. But as we are less sensible to shame than to our want of money and fear of what may happen, there is very general satisfaction, to the scandal of all decent people. And I, from being a man of importance, on whom the eyes of all Europe would have been fixed, have fallen to the humble condition of a Parisian bourgeois. So be it : it is better for health and tranquillity.’

To speak of cowardice in this connection is absurd ; but the finances of France were in a terrible state of disorder, and want of funds had more to do with the refusal of the challenge than even the indecision of the king. The real cause of the apparent disgrace lay in the attempt to win an impossible position by mere empty brag. The mistake is not likely to be repeated ; and we may feel sure that, in the future, any nation proposing

¹ Lacour-Gayet, ii. 485.

an armed interference with the government of the Low Countries, will take care, as a preliminary measure, to place its navy on a satisfactory footing.

The sequel to the English alliance with Prussia, which led to the Russian armament of 1791, though referred to on p. 380, has no place in the Middleton Papers, any more than has the Spanish armament of 1790 (pp. 351-3). Both happened after Middleton's retirement from the navy office, the causes of which are detailed in full, pp. 337-350, but may be summed up as dissatisfaction at the delay of the admiralty and the government in carrying out the recommendation of the commission of enquiry for the improvement of the navy board. As it was known that these recommendations had been made at Middleton's suggestion, and as, by many of his colleagues and by the office generally, his evidence could not but be considered hostile, this delay, which he held to be tantamount to a refusal, placed him in a position untenable, or at any rate most unsatisfactory. So he resigned (p. 350), though without anything approaching to a quarrel either with Lord Chatham, first lord of the admiralty, or his brother, William Pitt, first lord of the treasury.

The position which he held during the next four years, of unofficial adviser of the admiralty, is very curious (pp. 351-68), and the sea lords must have been more than human if they did not resent his interference; but we have no record of any quarrel.

It was during this time that Lady Middleton died¹ (10th October, 1792), and there are copies of a few letters to intimate and clerical friends, truly

¹ Cf. *Life of William Wilberforce*, i. 370-1.

beautiful in their expression of love and resignation to the Divine Will, which bring before us the more amiable side of Middleton's character. It is not without regret that the judgment has been formed that they ought not to be included in this volume.

In May 1794 he joined the admiralty as senior naval lord, under Lord Chatham; and his letters at this time are interesting from the light which they throw on the conduct of affairs during the first years of that long war. It is curious to note (p. 353) that at first Middleton was decidedly of opinion that the war would be but a short one. He seems to have changed his opinion when he was at the admiralty. In his disposition of the fleet we may think that he was guided a good deal by Patton's experience, and there can be no doubt that he did give great weight to Patton's opinion; but we may be equally sure that the disposition finally arrived at was his own. It should be added that it is hoped that, if the references to Hood's and Patton's *Signal Books* (pp. 288, 369, 372, 375) lead to a discovery of any existing copies—and there are probably several—they may be brought to our Secretary's notice.

Lord Chatham retired in December, 1794, and was succeeded by Earl Spencer, with whom it appears (p. 428), that Middleton's relations were never cordial; they ended in the official difference which is detailed in pp. 418–30, and in his almost compulsory resignation.



CONTENTS

Portrait of Sir Charles Middleton as Rear-Admiral (? 1788),
 from the painting by Lady Middleton, now in the possession
 of Mr. Ernest Noel, of Hingham Hall, Norfolk . . . *Frontispiece*

[Lady Middleton was a pupil and life-long friend of Sir
 Joshua Reynolds, whose assistance may, in the opinion
 of some critics, be detected in the painting.]

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	vii
Correspondence, 1779-82, with the Earl of Sandwich	I
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1779-82 ; including letters to Lord George Germain and Lord Shelburne	44
Letters from Commissioner Laforey, 1780-88, with enclosures from Captain Charles Thompson, Sir Hyde Parker, Sir George Rodney, Lord Howe	82
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1783 ; including letters to or from William Pitt, Lord Keppel, Lord Howe, Mr. Stephens, the Treasury, the King	149
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1784 ; including letters to or from Lord Howe, Sir John Lindsay, William Pitt, the Admiralty	172
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1785 ; including letters to or from Lord Howe, William Pitt, the King	191
Mr. Pitt's Queries	198
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1786 ; including letters to or from William Pitt, Francis Baring, Commissioners of Enquiry .	213

	PAGE
Book of Navy Board Warrants	227
Constitution of the Navy Board	235
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1787 ; including letters to or from William Pitt, Major Mitchell, Captain Macbride, Vice-Admiral Graves, Sir George Yonge, Lord Howe, Lord Inchiquin, Francis Baring, Rear-Admiral Gower . . .	250
Preparation for War	289
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1788 ; including letters to or from William Pitt, James Bowen, Commissioners of Customs	305
Letters to Lord Sandwich, January and February 1789 . . .	315
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1789 ; including letters to or from Lord Chatham, William Pitt, 'A Friend,' the King, Captain Ben. Caldwell	319
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1790 ; including letters to or from Commissioner Fanshawe, William Pitt, Commissioner Martin	333
Resignation of Office	347
Letters to Lord Chatham, 1793	353
Queries to be sent to Toulon	357
On the State of our Fleet	361
Correspondence with Philip Patton, 1784-94	368
Patton's proposed Disposition of the Fleet	394
Proposed Arrangement of the Fleet, June 1794	403
Memorandum as to the Arrangement, 1795	411
Correspondence, 1795 ; including letters to and from Sir John Laforey, James Dick, Earl Spencer	414



LETTERS AND PAPERS

done with good effect last year in America, and it should seem to me that they would answer very salutary purposes when the invasion appears on our coast. Pray turn this matter in your thoughts; and if you think it advisable or practicable, let it be carried into immediate execution. I have written to the admiralty board to the same purpose.

¹ But it was not till the 16th August that the 'combined fleet' appeared off Plymouth. On this, see Beatson, iv. 545, 546.

	PAGE
Book of Navy Board Warrants	227
Constitution of the Navy Board	235
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1787 ; including letters to or from William Pitt, Major Mitchell, Captain Macbride, Vice-Admiral Graves, Sir George Yonge, Lord Howe, Lord Inchiquin, Francis Baring, Rear-Admiral Gower	250
Preparation for War	289
Correspondence and Memoranda, 1788 ; including letters to or from William Pitt, James Bowen, Commissioners of Customs	305
Letters to Lord Sandwich, January and February 1789	315

*This volume—LETTERS AND PAPERS
OF CHARLES LORD BARHAM, 1758-
1813 (Vol. II.)—announced for last year, has been
unavoidably delayed, but is now issued on the 1909
subscription.*

April 1910



LETTERS AND PAPERS
OF
LORD BARHAM

*CORRESPONDENCE WITH LORD
SANDWICH*

Sandwich to Middleton

[*Holograph.*]

Blackheath. 24th July, 1779.

Dear Sir,—I have had a letter from Admiral Gambier, which mentions, among several others, one thing that I think should be done in the present situation of affairs¹; that is, the preparing a number of temporary fire vessels of all sizes. This was done with good effect last year in America; and it should seem to me that they would answer very salutary purposes when the invasion appears on our coast. Pray turn this matter in your thoughts; and if you think it advisable or practicable, let it be carried into immediate execution. I have written to the admiralty board to the same purpose.

¹ But it was not till the 16th August that the 'combined fleet' appeared off Plymouth. On this, see Beatson, iv. 545, 546.

If you wish to talk to me upon this subject before anything is done, you will find me at home all this day, morning and evening; and I dine at three o'clock.

I am, most sincerely yours,
SANDWICH.

*Middleton to Sandwich*¹

[*Fair copy in Middleton's hand. Endorsed by Middleton: Letter to Lord S. on Naval Subjects.*]

1779.

My Lord,—The enclosed letter² relative to Haslar Hospital contains so much reason and good sense, that I can add nothing more to it than what I have repeated over and over again to your lordship; but the measures of government are so slow, and every improvement, however evident, so difficult to be carried into execution, that I am almost discouraged from taking any further share in proposing them.

I have heard a great deal of late of the want of success from our frigates, and that they are either unnecessarily in port, or employed without judgment. It is said we have upwards of 260 vessels of war, from forty-four guns downwards, at this time in commission, and 130 of them coppered; that few privateers are taken, and hardly any of our own trade retaken; that the enemy's trade do not suffer, while ours are not even safe within the Channel; that convoys are so uncertain, so seldom and defective, that we cannot keep the king's yards supplied with the necessary demands of home stores.

¹ An endorsement by Thomson queries whether this letter was ever sent. Middleton's endorsement suggests that it was; and indeed, it is scarcely more outspoken than some that follow, which certainly were sent.

² The enclosure was not copied.

In the last war, the greatest number of vessels employed at any period did not exceed 186, and not more than one of them coppered.¹ At that time our ports were filled with the enemy's privateers, our trade protected, the Channel clear and convoys regular.

To what then, my lord, can this difference be owing? To a cause which I would not whisper beyond this letter: that the fleet of England is not properly employed. I have more than once informed your lordship that doubling the number may ruin us by the expense, but will never answer the purpose proposed, unless a judicious plan is laid down and adhered to for the disposition of cruisers and convoys. I made you an offer of such a plan, but you referred me to Mr. Stephens. Expedients may relieve the mind and remove the evil for a moment, but can never produce any other effect. Such measures end in confusion and misfortunes; and I may venture to assert that, unless a new plan is adopted, and your lordship gives your whole time to the business of the admiralty, the misapplication of the fleet will bring ruin upon this country.

The office you are in, my lord, is one of the first magnitude at this time, and the safety of your sovereign and his dominions depends upon its operations. If I, my lord, who am a professional man, find myself unequal to the duties of the office I am in, with an application of twelve hours six days in the week, how is it possible that your lordship can manage yours, which is equally extensive, in three or four? Indeed, my lord, it cannot be. The two offices are so nearly connected, that I must be wilfully blind not to see the sad management that prevails at present, and the ruin that must accompany it.

¹ The Alarm, 32-gun frigate, coppered in 1761.

The impress service is become such a job of abuse from want of examination, that I have calculated from my own office account an expense of at least 40*l.* per man, notwithstanding very few of the numbers raised are seamen, and one-half of those raised are not kept three months in the service. This is a most gross abuse, and requires strict examination. The number of tenders employed at this time should be regularly attended to. The length of time that ships are kept in port for want of orders, wherever the fault lies, falls heavy upon the public.

The numbers [of men] that are discharged as invalids and unserviceable discovers such an abuse in the raising them, that your lordship's attention cannot be too much employed in attending to it. If this account was called for, it would expose the fallacy of all other returns of men, and fall heavy on the office that directs the rendezvous. The desertions from ships and hospitals are beyond imagination. The discipline of service is entirely lost, and to a great measure owing to admiralty indulgences, but still more to admiralty negligence. The want of vigour at that board has weakened its authority to such a degree over the officers of the fleet, that no respect is paid to its orders. The neglect of prosecuting the neutral captures has cost his Majesty upwards of 80,000*l.* The employing so many useless armed ships and small craft, and taking up the time of the yards in fitting and refitting them, has very improperly kept back our frigates which would otherwise have been coppered and at sea before this time. The moving and separating ships' companies in the injudicious manner in which it continues to be practised has not only given general dissatisfaction to the officers and men, but ruins the discipline of the service, and discourages every

captain from paying an attention to this material branch. By not returning them to their own ships, nor discharging [them] into those they are lent to, the payments are become so difficult, that the navy board has not the power of complying with the act of parliament. The consequence of this measure will cause mutinies from one end of the fleet to the other, for want of pay, when these ships are ordered to sea.

In short, my lord, for want of plan, for want of men of professional knowledge used to business to assist at the admiralty, and for want of method and execution, one error has produced another, and the whole has become such a mass of confusion, that I see no prospect of reducing it to order. All I can do at the navy office will avail but little if the admiralty continues what it is at present. It is, indeed, so wretchedly bad, that, if I waited for official orders and kept within the mere line of duty, without pressing or proposing what ought to come unasked for, we must inevitably stand still. These, my lord, are a few of the many observations I have made on naval management since I have been in office; and I must own I feel such a despondency from the impression they make, that I scarce know how to act. I know the king's fleet to be equal to any service, if it is properly employed; but is it possible, my lord, that gentlemen who are at an office one day, and following their amusements or private concerns another, can carry on a line of business that requires not only great practical knowledge, but the closest application and attention?

This, my lord, is free language; but as I have no view in it but the king's service, the public good, and your lordship's safety, I flatter myself it will be taken in good part. Till the admiralty is put upon

another footing, it will prove dangerous for your lordship's administration to put good officers to command at home or abroad. Such men will soon detect the weakness that cannot be concealed, and complain or quit as consequences may determine.

If these subjects should come before parliament, it will be out of my power to answer a question in favour of the admiralty, however strongly I may incline to support your lordship. How much better therefore to avoid the blame by application and attention, than defend by argument what can only blind and deceive the ignorant! The whole system of the admiralty is rotten, and it must tumble about your lordship's [ears] if it is not soon altered. The dockyards, from a want of proper attention to appointments, are in a wretched disabled state, without spirit, without discipline. The cause is obvious.

In short, my lord, we are in a most dangerous situation, and the only human means that can extricate us is mismanaged. Something must be done, and soon, to recover the naval part of government; otherways this kingdom will be lost. As to other boards, I can say little, though I have heard a great deal of their supineness; but I shall not trouble your lordship with their neglect, and only add that, however heavy the business of my own office is, I shall be at all times ready with my assistance where it can prove useful to the king's service, provided you allow me proper time for consideration. But opinions given off-hand on subjects of importance, are generally worse than no opinions.

I am, with great respect,

Your lordship's

Most faithful and obedient servant,

C. M.

[*Rough draft.*]

[Not dated.]

My Lord,—If you do not put active and determined men to command at the ports, and separate the western and other squadrons from such commands, the discipline of the navy will be lost, and a mutiny take place from one end of the fleet to the other. The office I am in is of that nature as to see every branch of the service and how it is conducted. [My zeal for its success often carries me out of my own line.]¹ If I was free to declare my opinion, the fleet is terribly managed [it is in a dreadful condition],¹ and cannot be otherways while the present system continues. The cause of every disorder, my lord, is in the admiralty, and till a reformation is begun there, no good can be expected from any other quarter. For want of proper men to conduct the business at the ports, no expedition is used in refitting the ships. The officers are not kept to their duty. The men are daily deserting in scores, and those who remain are inclined to mutiny. You seek for officers who will submit to the negligence of the admiralty board instead of reprehending it. What is the consequence? The ships continue inactive for want of order, and the force of the navy, instead of being employed against the enemy, are continually in port. For want of arrangement in your cruisers, no station is covered, and no interruption given to the enemy. By calling ships from this place to another as exigencies require, the whole coast lies exposed to the enemy and your numbers are lost.

¹ Deleted.

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

23rd October, 1780.

My Lord,—As it is probable the conversation I had the honour of holding with your lordship on Tuesday may be the means of more reserve on your lordship's part, and fewer visits to the admiralty on mine, I think it proper to explain by this opportunity some of the particulars which occasioned it, and the principle on which I shall ever think it my duty to act while in office.

The conduct I have ever observed to your lordship has been uniformly open and faithful; and the remonstrances, which I have been under the necessity of making from time to time, of the notorious remissness in office, have proceeded from a real friendship to your lordship and a hearty zeal for the king's service. I made them personally to your lordship because I knew you had the power to remedy them. I foretold the public misfortunes that would inevitably accompany such neglects; and urged and solicited, as if begging for myself, the means of preventing them.

The detention of the victuallers has very fortunately proved the only alarm hitherto; and though your lordship, in that instance, must have been conscious of the share the admiralty had in the disappointment, and the unwearied pains I had taken to procure timely convoys, yet you suffered the blame to fall upon the navy board, both in the closet and the cabinet. When I was sent for by Lord North, I had no intention of blaming any office, nor did I seek an opportunity of informing his Majesty where the fault lay; but when I found the admiralty had been exculpated by your lordship, and the disappointment of supplying the army very unfairly thrown upon the navy board, I could not, in justice to myself, avoid an explanation. Lord George

Germain became accidentally a party to the conversation, and from the dependence of his office-measures on the admiralty, seemed as well acquainted with the delays of convoys as I could be. Having no other intercourse with his lordship than what arose from the duties of my office, I had no reason to suppose him inimical to your lordship. If I had, I should certainly have avoided that opportunity of vindicating myself, however favourable.

The having frigates enough was no part of the conversation, as far as I remember ; but if my opinion had been asked, I could not have denied the number, exclusive of the advantages of copper, to be upwards of eighty more than at the highest period of the last war. The probable reasons for their not being more successful, I have more than once taken the liberty of explaining to your lordship ; and if my representations had made the impression I wished, your lordship would have no cause to use discretion in concealing your opinion at this time.

I have now to thank your lordship for having recommended me to his Majesty to fill an office of very high trust and importance in the naval line. The only return I could make was to discharge the duties of it faithfully. I have done so to the utmost of my ability, and find the labour and anxiety attending it more than my constitution or head will bear. My inclinations, my lord, lead to private stations and domestic comfort ; and if I had not seen the necessity of exertion and application at this critical juncture, I should have withdrawn from office before this time. The profits annexed to it are trifling and in no degree adequate to the labour or trust. I do not mention this circumstance as of any importance to myself, or that I wish it otherwise during my continuance in the office. But as soon as I remove from it I shall think it an act of

justice to my successor, as well as a benefit to his Majesty's service, to advise an increase to his salary.

That the admiralty cannot stand upon its present foundation I am morally certain, because its own weight must necessarily pull it down. Be this as it may, I am free to declare that the conduct I have observed to your lordship since in office, has been uniformly open and faithful, and the opinions I have given disinterested and friendly. Under this conviction, and without being conscious of any design to build up or pull down, farther that what appears necessary for my own justification,

I remain, with great respect,

Your lordship's

Most faithful and obedient servant,

CHAS. MIDDLETON.

Autograph Minute

[The copy written on foolscap, and folded in four in the usual way, has apparently had a paper-band round it, on which, several years later (judging by the writing) Middleton began to scribble a minute and continued it on to the paper of the letter. The band, or at any rate the earlier sentences of the minute no longer exist; they seem to have come to an end in saying something like 'Lord Sandwich was no worse than those who——' and continue:—]

followed him in my time and more zealous for the improvement of the service. He was called a jobber, but they are all equally so, and indeed more so than ever I found him to be, though more secret in their manner. In short, where there is no religion there can be no public principle.¹

¹ Cf. *post*, pp. 315-19.

Navy Board to Philip Stephens

[*Copy in Middleton's writing.*]

Navy Office. 4th January, 1781.

Sir,—Having by a minute of this board confined the charge of inspecting the building of ships in the merchant yards to such of the quartermen who are skilled in the theory as well as the practice of building, we think it necessary to desire you will be pleased to inform the right hon. the lords commissioners of the admiralty therewith, and that we are of opinion, such qualifications ought to be professed by every person who is further promoted in the shipwright branch ; and as the trust reposed in the warrant officers in our department has, from the increased magnitude of the navy and the very great expense attending it, risen to a degree inconceivable to those not conversant with this line of duty, it is of the utmost consequence to the king's service, and the expenditure of the public treasure, that the character of those who may be appointed to such offices should be fully known to their lordships.

We therefore think ourselves particularly called upon, at this alarming crisis, when the utmost exertion is expected from us in all parts of the world, 'to use our utmost endeavours to enable ourselves, in the particular duties of each officer acting under us, to discover who are honest, diligent, and active in, and for, his Majesty's service ; and who are careless, and unfaithfully remiss ; and accordingly, to recommend the one to the lord high admiral for preferment as places fall, and to certify the other for the check, suspense, or dismissal from the service, as the lord high admiral shall see fit.'

But in order to enable us to comply with this

most important part of our duty, we must request their lordships to indulge us, when places fall vacant, with a reasonable time for communicating such information as to the characters and abilities of the officers serving under us as may be necessary for their choice in filling them up. And being fully convinced that economy in the expenditure of the public treasure and activity in carrying on the king's service depend entirely on the choice and character of those acting as instruments under us, and that our authority over the yards cannot be maintained unless an attention is paid to our representation of their conduct, their lordships may depend on our recommendations being impartial and faithful, and that we shall be guided by no other motive than what tends to promote the king's service and the public good.

We are, Sir, &c.,

C. M. ; J. W. ; E. H. ; G. M. ; T. B. ;
W. B. ; R. T. ; E. L. C. ; S. W.

[The initials stand for Charles Middleton, comptroller ; John Williams and Edward Hunt, surveyors ; George Marsh, clerk of the acts ; Timothy Brett, comptroller of the treasurer's accounts ; William Bateman, comptroller of the storekeeper's accounts ; Richard Temple, Edward Le Cras, Samuel Wallis, extra commissioners.]

Middleton to Sandwich

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

4th January, 1781.

My Lord,—Do not, I pray, my lord, interpret the letter sent to the admiralty by the navy board this day as any infringement on your lordship's influence, or meant in any degree to interfere with it. I have long since observed to your lordship that it is the indispensable duty of the navy board to

represent to the admiralty the characters of the officers acting under their authority as places become vacant. By not continuing to do so, they have given their countenance to every appointment in the dockyards since the practice has been omitted, and might be called to an account by his Majesty or parliament for the present debilitated state of the yards in consequence of it. It is in this light I have viewed the omission, and on that ground only have proposed the recommendatory clause of the navy board's instructions to be complied with in future. In every other respect, where the king's service and the public good is not concerned,

I am, with great truth,

Your lordship's

Most faithful and obedient servant,

CHAS. MIDDLETON.

Autograph Minute

Private letter to Lord Sandwich accompanying the public one [of same date] from the navy board to the admiralty.

Navy Board to Philip Stephens

[Copy in Middleton's hand.]

8th January, 1781.

Sir,—In answer to your letter of the 6th instant, enclosing one from Daniel Eldridge, master-joiner of Woolwich yard, desiring for the reasons therein mentioned that he may be superannuated, we desire you will be pleased to acquaint their lordships that we are of opinion he is a proper object for superannuation; and, should his request be complied with, we beg leave to recommend John Cleversal, the present master-joiner of Sheerness, to be removed to Woolwich, as he is a very good

workman, a deserving man, and has been privately of great use to the king's service.

We desire further to inform their lordships that we know of no person more proper to succeed Cleversal in that yard than John Morse the 2nd, now acting-foreman there.

We are, &c.,

C. M., J. W., E. H., G. M., &c.

Middleton's Endorsement

To the Admiralty: recommending a very deserving man for the indulgence of a remove, and another able person to fill the vacant office of master-joiner of Sheerness Yard. The admiralty have complied with neither.

The L. C. A. to the Navy Board

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

Admiralty Office. 9th January, 1781.

Gentlemen,—Whereas in your letter of the 4th instant you have represented to us, &c. We have taken the same into consideration, and are to signify to you our entire approbation of your attending to the above recited important part of your duty; and you may be assured that we shall always consider your recommendation and censure of officers with all due attention. But we think it necessary to apprise you at the same time, that in the appointment of warrant officers within this department, which has been (doubtless for weighty reasons) entrusted to this board, we do not think it for the good of the service to confine ourselves to decide in consequence of the particular representations of any other office; but to take them into consideration, together with reports from other quarters, where we may think proper to make enquiry concerning

the merit of the persons who are in competition for promotion in the several dockyards, as has been the constant practice. And you are hereby desired and directed to report, without delay, and hereafter from time to time, your opinions of persons who are in the line of preferment, and whose merits entitle them to favour (or whose negligence or inability subject to censure), and not to make such reports only when vacancies actually exist; in order that we may always have full time to direct our enquiries and to form an opinion of the character and sufficiency of the persons in question; for by this mode more general information will be obtained, and a wider field remain open for rewarding merit and punishing offences, than if the enquiry was carried on upon more limited principles. And we think it necessary to add, that we have made it our constant practice to bring forward such persons only in the shipwright branch, and in other employments in the dockyards, as we have been convinced, from the fullest investigation of their characters, have been the best qualified for the offices to which they have been appointed; and we cannot recollect any instance of precipitation in making these appointments, without giving time to receive ample information.

We are your affectionate friends,

(Signed)	SANDWICH.	BAMBER GASCOYNE.
	H. PENTON.	C. F. GREVILLE.
	MULGRAVE.	G. DARBY.

Middleton's Minute

As the carrying on a contest between the two boards at this time must be attended with great prejudice to the king's service, the comptroller rather chose to reply to Lord Sandwich than the admiralty, and particularly as he was convinced his lordship drew up the reply.

*Middleton to Sandwich**[Copy in Middleton's hand.]*

19th January, 1781.

My Lord,—Mr. Nelson's warrant coming to the navy office this day has informed me that you continue, notwithstanding our late letter, to make removes in the yards without consulting this board on the subject of character. Your lordship may affect as much contempt as you please for the opinion of the navy board, and endeavour to lessen its authority over its officers by whatever means you please. But your lordship may be assured, from my having no other object in view than serving his Majesty faithfully, and promoting his service to the utmost of my ability, I shall at all times think it my duty to inform him of every transaction that tends to his prejudice in the department I am in. Had your lordship consulted the admiralty correspondence with this board, you would have found they did not usually wait for recommendations coming from the navy board, but directed them to propose persons fitting to fill up vacancies as they happened. Your lordship's determination, however, of passing by this board upon such occasions has effectually destroyed the means I have been pursuing, of explaining to every officer that came through my hands the nature and importance of the trust; the protection and encouragement he might depend upon while he deserved it; and the mortification and disgrace that would attend a contrary conduct. How well your lordship is serving his Majesty by so doing, I shall think it my duty to explain at a proper season. The involving me with the admiralty board, after what I wrote your lordship on the subject of the navy board's letter, was neither candid nor generous; and the expedition

with which you collected six lords to sign a return to it, when I have orders of the first consequence at this time in my possession, and of long standing, signed only by the secretary till lords could be convened, discovers the improper resentment it occasioned. I have no inclination nor intention, my lord, to contend with the admiralty, because I think it indecent and improper ; but I know the ground I stand upon to be constitutionally firm, and I am not to be intimidated by any man, or set of men, from persisting in what I know to be my duty. If your lordship has the king's service and the public welfare at heart, you must naturally be pleased to receive information from the fountain-head, and ought to be thankful to those who take pains in procuring it ; but to suppose any management in getting the members of the navy board to resume their privilege of recommending characters, is doing me injustice. It is selfish measures, my lord, that require contrivance. All such I disavow, and the large number that signed the letter was accidentally present, and not called for the purpose.

I am, with great respect,

Your lordship's

Most obedient and most humble servant,

CHAS. MIDDLETON.

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

21st January, 1781.

My Lord,—I should not take the liberty of writing to your lordship on a subject out of my department but for the concern I took in it at your lordship's desire ; neither do I mean by so doing to animadvert upon your late appointments in this line.

Mr. Thompson, the surgeon of the Victory's letters are in your possession, and the pains he took

in collecting the information on which the intended reform at Haslar Hospital was begun are not unknown to your lordship. On this ground I think it my duty to recommend Mr. Thompson as deserving promotion in his Majesty's service ; and if a commissioner of sick and hurt is thought adequate to the task of reforming Haslar, who so well qualified to correct the evil as Mr. Thompson, who first pointed out and investigated it ?

On this occasion, like many others, I have been kept in ignorance of the true motive and disappointed under an appearance of confidence and friendship ; and when I thought I was labouring for the king's service and your lordship's credit, I perceived too late that another end was in view. This political conduct on your lordship's part has induced one of the most sincere friends you ever had to withdraw himself from your service and councils. Until I was disgusted with a succession of such treatment, it was my study and pleasure to consider and contrive how I could best assist your lordship, not only with the very small abilities I possess, but with the whole power of the office I am in.

Had your lordship's conduct towards me been equally single and undisguised, had you followed the disinterested advice I gave you as to men and measures, you would have had no party opposition to contend with in the fleet ; the spirit of faction, which has gained strength by your political system of management, would have been crushed under a more equitable one, and your own situation have been firm as a rock at this day.

Your lordship, however, prefers the shadow of friendship to the substance. You have been used to men of a ductile cast, who, under the mask of serving your lordship, were promoting their own views. Such men, my lord, are friends while the

sun shines, but they will desert you in the shade. True friendship is of different nature. Its foundation is principle, and its support mutual confidence ; it was my wish to prove myself such a friend, but I saw with concern it was impossible.

I am nevertheless, with respect and every good wish towards your lordship's real interest,

Your most obliged and faithful servant,

CHAS. MIDDLETON.

Endorsed by Middleton.

Letter to Lord Sandwich, enclosing one from Admiral Kempenfelt regretting nothing had been done for Mr. Thompson, surgeon of the Victory, for his assiduity relative to Haslar Hospital. The two gentlemen appointed commissioners of sick and hurt at this time were :—Mr. Walker, surgeon of the Cambridge, ten years junior on the list to Mr. Thompson ; and Mr. Hicks, a fourth clerk at £40 *per an.*, in the storekeeper's office in Deptford yard.

Sandwich to Middleton

[*Holograph.*]

Blackheath. 22nd January, 1781.

Dear Sir,—It has been an observation of mine, confirmed by long experience, that when friends differ, discussions in writing always tend to widen the breach, which is by no means my intention ; and it shall be no fault of mine if things between us do not revert to their proper state ; but this I must lay down as the foundation of all future confidential intercourse : that I cannot submit to allow of the intermediate recommendation of the navy board collectively with regard to the appointment of the officers of the dockyards. I have been connected

with the admiralty office for above twenty years,¹ and I never remember that this object was pursued as it has been on a late occasion ; and though I am persuaded that your intention in it is good, I know that is a measure big with inconvenience and mischief, and that this branch of the business, for the good of the service, must be continued in its proper channel.

I am very willing to give Mr. Thompson, of the Victory, any proper encouragement ; but Admiral Kempenfelt's letter, which you have enclosed to me, has brought to me (I believe) the first notice of his having any object in view, and I do not at present see what particular point he has in expectation. The only office, in consequence of the new regulation at Haslar Hospital, that I recollect to have been given by the admiralty, has been the resident commissioner ; but the gentlemen who were already members of the board of sick and hurt certainly were entitled to preference on this occasion ; and there were in my opinion invincible objections to the giving this office to a person of the medical faculty. If you will let me more particularly into Mr. Thompson's views, you will find me well disposed to listen to what you say in his favour, as well as to any information you may think proper to give me with regard to arrangements in the naval department ; but, as I have already said, I cannot submit to official encroachment.

I am, with great regard,

Your most obedient and most faithful servant,
SANDWICH.

¹ Very much above : for above 36 years ; in fact, since December 1744.

Minute by Middleton

The regulations for Haslar Hospital were modelled by the comptroller under the idea of a military governor or sea officer superintending it. Instead of which, it only gave an opportunity of making two new commissioners of sick and hurt. The irregularities in the hospital must of course continue as they did.

Middleton to Sandwich

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

23rd January, 1781.

My Lord,—There would be nothing so repugnant to my inclinations as to pursue any steps that would widen the breach that has been unluckily opened between us ; and I cannot but flatter myself that, could I place my procedure on some late occasions in its true point of view, you would do justice to my intentions. It is far from my intention to forget that your lordship, in a most kind and unexpected manner, placed me in the employment I now hold, and thereby laid me under an obligation that claims every return in my power consistent with my principles. If your lordship will take the trouble to scrutinise any transaction in which I may have appeared inattentive to this claim, I am persuaded you will find it proceed from no other motive than a sincere zeal to perform what appears to me to be the duties of my office, and therein making the truest acknowledgment to your lordship by not disgracing your recommendation.

I cannot, however, agree with your lordship on the present subject of dispute, nor take upon me to neglect my duty because my predecessors have omitted theirs. Information, my lord, cannot be called an encroachment on office ; and, when your

lordship sees the report made by the navy board, you will find no such intention as you apprehend, and no more than I should think it my duty to encourage if I was lord high admiral of England. Desirous, therefore, as I may be, of confidential intercourse with your lordship, I would even sacrifice that pleasure to any infringement on my duty ; and rather than acquiesce in seeing merit discouraged, and idleness or want of character (however recommended) brought forward, I shall, however reluctantly at the present juncture, deliver up the patent I am possessed of.

I have the honour to be, with respect,

Your lordship's

Most faithful and obedient servant,

CHAS. MIDDLETON.

P.S.—I conclude Mr. Thompson's object must be a dockyard.

Sandwich to Middleton

[*Holograph.*]

Admiralty. 24th January, 1781.

Dear Sir,—I shall adhere firmly to my resolution of not discussing by letter the points on which we have differed. You will probably retain your opinion, and I mine ; but I have some hopes, from the contents of your last letter, that our friendly intercourse and connection may not be discontinued, notwithstanding this difference of opinion ; and I am ready, on my part, to renew and continue it with the same cordiality as before existed. When next we meet, not a word shall drop from me of the disagreeable matters that have lately passed ; and I shall continue to ask information from you, as I have done ever since you have been comptroller of the navy, in matters both within and without the cogni-

sance of the navy board. This has been my method, in every branch of business in which I have been concerned, to gain knowledge from men of ability who I thought were likely to give me useful instruction. No one comes more fully under that description than yourself, and my conduct shows that the instruction I have received from you has been much attended to by me. As to the particular official dispute about recommendation to the offices in the dockyards, I think it would be unfair not to apprise you that the board of admiralty are united in their opinion upon that subject; and that, if it was in my inclination, it would not be in my power to prevail on them to vary from the ground they have taken in their letter to the navy board of the 8th of this instant.

I am, with great regard,
Your most obedient and most faithful servant,
SANDWICH.

Minute by Middleton

Two appointments have been made in the yards since the receipt of this letter, and the navy board passed by as before.

Middleton to Sandwich

[Draft on the back of Sandwich's holograph letter of the same date.]

24th January, 1781.

My Lord,—I think myself very happy in your lordship's renewed assurance of cordiality, notwithstanding a difference of sentiments on certain subjects; and if the admiralty abide by the contents of their letter to the navy board of the 8th instant, we may probably still agree on that ground.

I am, &c.

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

3rd February, 1781.

My Lord,—Perceiving from some warrants that have lately passed this board an inclination in the admiralty to discourage our recommendations, I find myself under the painful necessity of troubling your lordship once more on the subject.

The first instance is John Cleversal, who has not been rewarded with a removal from Sheerness to Woolwich, though your lordship could have confirmed the navy board's report of his private services from several letters I put into your hands, the contents of which have given rise to many useful regulations. The having encouraged him, as was fitting, to expect this attention, I cannot but feel the neglect of it in some degree myself.

The second instance is John Morse, whom we recommended as one of the most able men in his line to have succeeded at Sheerness, of the active age of thirty-four; instead of whom we see John Smart preferred, aged sixty-three. This appointment, with two others of yet later date, confirm me in an opinion—and purposely, I should suppose—that you are determined to receive no recommendations from the board at which I preside—a determination, my lord, which I have not a single motive for wishing to be given up, but what arises from a firm conviction that the yards cannot be supplied with capable officers while it remains in force.

That for the yards to be well officered is of the utmost importance to the naval service is indisputable. I submit it then to your lordship's unprejudiced judgment, how it can be possible for the admiralty, private enquiries being subject to partiality and beneath their dignity, to get at the real characters of yard officers but by the information of

the navy board, who have the immediate direction of them? Every character forwarded by this board stands confirmed by the principal officers of each yard collectively and individually; but the list we shall soon transmit to the admiralty will show how little attention has been paid hitherto to character and length of servitude.

To the want of a board whose recommendation of merit would be the assured passport to preferment, I cannot but impute almost every instance we meet with of fraud and idleness; and I appeal to your lordship, whether the clerks, who, though ever so deserving, have little or no prospect beyond their 40*l.* salary, are not exposed to a dangerous dependence upon the illicit bounty of contractors, and other such unwarrantable methods of increasing their incomes? How, again, if our recommendations are slighted, can it be possible for us to maintain that influence and authority in the yards which the very nature of our office demands, and, without which the superior officers are, in fact, as independent of us as if we were unconnected with them?

Your lordship seems to suspect the principle I am combating for, as tending to an encroachment upon the admiralty. But pardon me, my lord, if I suggest that it is in the instructions of the navy board to forward recommendations to the admiralty; and for precedents accordingly, I believe I need only refer your lordship to not very ancient records of our office. The business of the victualling office is carried on upon this principle to this day. We are responsible for such recommendations; and the responsibility is, of itself, a proof that we have been wanting in our duty, and deserving the censure of the admiralty for omitting them during so long a time.

But as this subject of encroachment is the tenderest ground we stand upon, I must beg your lordship's patience a little longer, while I attempt to convince you that I cannot possibly have any selfish view in this matter, either as comptroller of the navy or as an individual. As comptroller of the navy, I cannot designedly encroach upon a foreign patronage, while the patronage already with us—I mean that which includes the inferior officers—is, in effect, transferred by us to the superior officers, whose recommendations we receive exactly in the degree in which we wish ours to be received by the admiralty; not so implicitly as to deprive ourselves of the right of judging recommendations, how far they are complete or deficient, yet withal so generally as to render such recommendations an object strong enough to rouse the exertion of such as wish for advancement. Thus much may serve to exculpate me from any ambitious designs as a member of the board.

And considering myself as an individual, your lordship has obligingly opened a door for me to the greatest personal interest by expressing the attention you are ready to pay to my private recommendations. Do me the justice, therefore, to believe, my lord, that my views are beyond all objects short of the king's service; and that it is owing to my sincere regard thereto, that, delicate as my situation is as a remonstrant with your lordship, I cannot be an acquiescent witness of the present weak state of the yards, and likely to continue so, according to the current arrangements, at a crisis when the utmost efforts of every officer in every department of the navy, from the highest to the lowest, are most loudly demanded.

Your lordship cannot be surprised if, under my conviction of the importance of the matter, I leave

no method untried of restoring recommendations from the navy board to their original credit at the admiralty. Far the most desirable method is that I now pursue in attempting to convince your lordship, and happy shall I be in succeeding. Your lordship need not be troubled for an answer. Any further discussions by letter must be unnecessary, as they are disagreeable to your lordship; I shall therefore expect no answer, but indulge myself with the hope of finding my arguments to have had some weight with your lordship, as opportunities offer in the course of business for reducing them to practice.

I am, my lord, with the truest regard, . . .

Sandwich to Middleton

[*Holograph.*]

Admiralty. 3rd February, 1781.

Dear Sir,—I have neither leisure nor inclination to enter into a discussion upon the subject of the letter with which you have favoured me, but I think it a justice due to you to say that I have not the most distant suspicion that your ideas are founded on any other motive than your zeal for the good of his Majesty's service. I, however, have the misfortune to differ with you in opinion about the mode in which the business in question should be carried on; and that opinion is so rooted in my mind that I am persuaded I shall not change it. Everything you point at in your letter may be attained by other means than the collective testimony of the whole navy board, many of whom have very few opportunities of knowing the particular characters of the persons serving in the dockyards, otherwise than by representations from persons prejudiced or interested.

The naval establishment points out this¹ as the proper office to judge and determine on the merit of the several candidates for offices within the department ; and I should think myself unworthy to remain at the head of this office if I did not take the most effectual means to be apprised of the real merit of those who are brought forward in the several branches of naval business.

I shall keep Mr. Thompson's letter as a memorandum of the object he has in view, and am, with great regard,

Your most obedient and most faithful servant,
SANDWICH.

Middleton to Sandwich

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

[February, 1781?]

My Lord,—In obedience to the admiralty directions, we have transmitted a list of such persons as are reported by the commissioners and principal officers of the yards to be qualified for preferment—an account which may serve very well for general information, but by no means answers the intention of the admiralty and navy board's instructions, which require the characters of persons fitting for places as they fall vacant in the yards. Had these wise regulations been observed, and improper influence kept out of the yards, there would not have appeared so mortifying a list as we now send of deserving persons, unprovided for till their ages and servitude have made them more proper objects for superannuation than preferment.

I am aware, my lord, that I have it in my power to bring this contest to an issue at any time, by refusing a warrant for the entry and payment of

¹ *Sc.* the admiralty.

such persons whose appointments are not established on the instruction of both boards ; but as the doing so at the present juncture might be productive of confusion, I rather choose to submit the whole to the king's pleasure. Your lordship will do me the justice to believe that I have left no means untried to avoid troubling his Majesty on the present occasion ; but as your opinion is not to be changed, and the subject in dispute must continually occur in the course of business, I do not see how it can ever otherways be terminated. The advantage which your lordship, as a minister, has over me, as an individual, in a reference of this kind is obvious ; but, trusting to the disinterestedness of my motives, and relying on his Majesty's discernment, I have nothing to apprehend from the issue.

If private recommendations and partial enquiries are to be preferred to navy board information, you may as well dismiss the whole establishment at once ; and I am sorry to say the political creed that prevails at present has very near accomplished this purpose already. It may not be known at the admiralty, but it is nevertheless true, that we dare not contest a single point of duty with either shipwrights, caulkers, or ropemakers at this time ; we have no authority over the yards, because they have been taught to pass by the navy board for recommendations, and of course [are] not anxious about conduct or character. How business can be conducted under such discipline I leave to any unprejudiced person to judge. The going to the king is a measure I most sincerely wish to avoid ; and nothing less than giving up what appears to me a most essential part of my duty should induce me to it.

But as long as the navy board discontinue their recommendations, the admiralty cannot be respon-

sible to his Majesty for their appointments ; and till that object is obtained, the dockyards cannot be furnished with able and deserving officers. I am not contending for the nonsense of power, nor the childish desire of consequence in office ; and if it is thought more consistent with the dignity of the admiralty to direct the navy board from time to time to recommend three or more persons fit for offices as they fall vacant, I am very well satisfied, and will accommodate your lordship to the best of my power. But if it is insisted that the interposition of the board must be thrown aside, I must, however reluctantly, force my inclinations to give way to my duty, and receive his Majesty's commands on so important an article of it before I can give my consent to part with it.

I am, and shall be nevertheless, with great respect . . .

Endorsed by Middleton

January, 1786.—This letter was never sent to Lord S., and I am glad of it, as all his successors, notwithstanding their great pretensions to a regard for the public service, have proceeded in the same way ; and I find politics have got too great a hold on this branch of the navy for me to withstand it. God knows what is best ; but I shall contend no more for the public, having raised a nest of hornets already by so doing. I trust those who follow me will have more weight than I have had, and influence ministers to correct these evils.

*Middleton to Mr. White*¹

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

24th December, 1781.

As the master-joiner of Woolwich yard is become too infirm to carry on the business of his office, I was naturally led to enquire into the character of the leading man in that branch. The answer not coming up to my expectations, I enquired who had placed him there, and, to my great surprise and disappointment, found it to be Mr. White.

I now perceive that all my endeavours must end in nothing; for if you, to whom I have said so much on this subject, will put men into places of trust who are incapable of performing the duties of them, and thereby act unjustly by those who are, to the prejudice of the king's service, what am I to expect from others who have not fallen so immediately under my notice?

Gentlemen may think to deceive me in this particular, and will probably succeed for a time; but as it is not likely I shall leave the office I am in soon—if my health will permit me to go through the fatigue attending it—I shall, by degrees, get at the merits of most recommendations and judge accordingly of those who have promoted them.

In the present instance you have disappointed me, and my only reason for writing this letter is to inform you of it. I leave the rest to your own imagination, as I cannot write with any degree of patience on a breach of trust. . . .

¹ Master-shipwright in Portsmouth yard.

*John Greenway*¹ to *Mr. Hunt*²

Endorsed: Remarks on the present mode of accounting for the expense of timber.

Portsmouth Yard. 2nd March, 1782.

Honourable Sir,—Having for a considerable time past had reason to believe that there was a deficiency of oak timber in these stores, I pray leave to acquaint you that I have caused a cursory survey of it to be taken, and on a comparison of what was found in the yard with my balance, find the undermentioned difference, viz. :—

	Straight			Compass ⁴			Thick-stuff ⁵	
	English		Foreign	English		Foreign	English	Foreign
	Rough	Sided ³	Sided	Rough	Sided	Sided	English	Foreign
Remaining pr. balance	Lds.	Lds.	Lds.	Lds.	Lds.	Lds.	Lds.	Lds.
By a cursory survey taken by a shipwright, 30 June, 1781	3630·17	417·24	474·36	16547·36	2453·21	—	—	15·15
	2281·9	251·14	—	8335·17	2264·30	—	1380·14	—
Deficient.	1349·8	166·10	474·36	8212·19	188·41	—	—	15·15
Surplus .	—	—	—	—	—	127·32	1556·3	—

N.B.—Where the timber contents could not be come at in the piles or sided timber, &c., with rough contents, the survey quantity is lessened thereby, and of course the deficiency is much increased.

This great deficiency must, I presume, be occasioned by some of the quartermen neglecting to

¹ Presumably the storekeeper.

² The surveyor of the navy.

³ Smoothed on one side.

⁴ Crooked or curved.

⁵ Sided timber, between 4" and 12" in thickness.

deliver a full account of the timber used by them monthly, and by their often discharging the store of only the net instead of the original rough contents of the sided timber and thick-stuff, as directed by the honourable navy board's order of 26 February, 1772, which I trust is confirmed by the surplus of thick-stuff converted from rough timber ; I am also convinced the plank overflows from the same reason. This deficiency I apprehend has long been a growing one, principally caused by the institution of the above mode of accounting instead of the good old one of long duration, which was clear and unembarrassed ; as when rough timber was converted, I had a discharge for it as such, and was recharged with it on conversion as sided ; was, as used, wrote for as sided, and valued accordingly. But the new mode directs all parts of the conversion to be called what it is not ; sided timber is to be called rough ; thick-stuff, plank, &c., is to be called rough, offal slabs called rough, and wrote for as such, according to its measurement as part of the original contents of the tree. This misnaming everything is an idea that cannot be impressed on the minds of all the quartermen of the yard, and indeed on the working-man also ; I fear they never will imbibe it. This is a matter I have no power to correct, and can only take such credit as the monthly notes of expense allow me ; nor can the builder act otherwise than adopting the quartermen's notes. The evil is a serious one, for the balance of my accounts will never agree with the state of real timber in the yard. It is time, I humbly conceive, to have this matter rectified, and the only way of doing it I presume is a general survey of timber plank, &c., and the restoration of the old, plain, clear way of accounting by calling every article by its proper denomination. I apprehend other yards must

have found this inconvenience from the order of 26 February, 1772. All which is submitted to your consideration by

Honble. Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
JN. GREENWAY.

TO THE KING

[*Copy in Middleton's hand.*]

[? 1781.]

May it please your Majesty,—The comptroller of your royal navy most unwillingly intrudes upon your Majesty's presence to declare the inevitable bad consequences of the present prevailing mode of supplying vacancies in the dockyards. He presumes to suggest that they are at this time in a disabled state, and that the only remedy against the continuance thereof is by restoring navy board recommendations to honour at the admiralty.

This measure your comptroller knows not how to accomplish, without the hazard of interrupting the official business of both the boards, but by this indulgence of access to your royal person. A reserve destructive to the cordiality that should subsist between the first lord of the admiralty and the comptroller of the navy has been the effect of the latter's venturing lately to account to your Majesty for the neglect of seasonable convoys to the victualing transports unfairly imputed to the navy board; before and since which, your comptroller has ineffectually used every argument to convince the Earl of Sandwich that navy board recommendations should be deemed the generally necessary qualifications of all persons appointed to vacant offices in the yards. Of the propriety of this the comptroller doubts not but he could convince your Majesty,

from the very nature and institution of the navy board ; from their supposed authoritative interference in every branch of business carried on in the yard, and also from their responsibility for the capacity and conduct of every yard officer ; not to mention the ancient practice of the navy board, and the instructions of the Duke of York, lord high admiral, in which their extremest attention to the above recommendations to be forwarded to the admiralty is expressly demanded. Nor can too much stress be laid, as your comptroller believes, on the characters of yard officers ; because, independent of current duty, it entirely depends on their honesty and discernment to see the faithful performance of the increasing great contracts for naval stores.

Struck with the importance of the object your comptroller has not failed to explain the duties of office, and to guard against the neglect or abuses thereof in the case of every newly appointed officer ; publicly declaring that ability, faithfully and strenuously exerted, would be the only road to advancement. But such declarations must be treated as nugatory, and every other measure in his power become ineffectual towards the good of your Majesty's service, if any influence be admitted in appointments to vacancies but such as arises from character, the truth of which must be forwarded to the admiralty by the navy board, because the latter by virtue of its office, as inspector and overseer of the yards, can alone get at informations sufficient to determine upon the merit or demerit of every officer therein employed.

Your comptroller begs leave most humbly to assure your Majesty, that nothing but the most ardent zeal for your Majesty's service could have impelled him to present this memorial, or to mention facts that might in the least reflect on the Earl of

Sandwich, to whom the comptroller's obligations for recommending him to your Majesty's notice will always claim every instance of gratitude compatible with what appears to him his duty to his king and country. He knows no man in a public capacity any farther than his character ; and, anxious to make the best return in his power for your Majesty's gracious approbation hitherto, he humbly requests your royal interposition in this instance, without which he fears his best services, poor as they are and very inadequate to his wishes for the honour and welfare of your Majesty's navy, must be in a great degree fruitless, if not totally frustrated.

Minute by Middleton

Intended to have been presented to his Majesty on the first improper appointment in the dockyards. None however happened during the remaining part of the administration.

[Never sent.]

Middleton to Lord Sandwich

[*Rough draft.*]

[? 1781.¹]

My Lord,—I am afraid it has not occurred to your lordship that this is the only opportunity that may offer of rewarding Admiral Kempenfelt for the disinterested zeal and fatigue which he has bestowed on the king's service for these two years past ; and that the command of a small squadron at this time against the Dutch would be a proper encouragement for others to serve his Majesty

¹ It seems not improbable that Middleton's idea was for Kempenfelt to have command of the squadron which was entrusted to Hyde Parker. If so, the date would be March. More probably, perhaps, he meant the squadron described on p. 38.

PROJECT FOR THE CAMPAIGN 37

with equal zeal and fidelity. The share I have had in prevailing with this gentleman to continue so long in a most disagreeable though important station, and the knowledge I have of his modesty in everything concerning himself, makes it a duty in me to remind your lordship of the present opportunity. A few weeks will be sufficient for the purpose I mean, when he may be ready to return to his former station; in which your lordship shall have every assistance in my power.

Project for the Naval Campaign, 1782

[*Endorsed*: A naval arrangement for 1782, given to Lord Sandwich on Christmas Day and desired by Sir C. M. to be submitted to all able sea-officers unconnected with party or politics.]

West Indies

[*Fair Copy. Autograph.*¹]

25th December, 1781.

Send as many of the three-decked ships in addition to those already ordered as can be got ready to sail within a fortnight. They must proceed singly² to Sir George Rodney's rendezvous in the West Indies and not be diverted on their passage by chasing or otherways. The number of ships on this service must positively exceed that of the enemy by at least four or five sail of the line including 50-gun ships. If this measure is pursued, there will be a great probability of saving the island of Jamaica, and destroying the enemies' naval force employed against it;³ but if the British squadron is

¹ There is also a rough draft of this, which—independent of mere changes of phrase—is sometimes more full. The deleted sentences are here given in bracketed notes.

² [So as not to alarm the enemy and occasion more ships being sent out from Cadiz.]

³ [Had Sir George Rodney's ships sailed single, so as to have got to St. Lucia before Vaudreuil, I would have advised a less

inferior, we shall not only lose the island but every ship of war remaining in its ports.

North Sea

This station is become of great importance and must be particularly attended to. The squadron employed on it must be reinforced in the spring with all the remaining three-decked ships that can not be sent to the West Indies, and such others as are not employed to the westward.¹ They must assemble at the Gun-Fleet in the month of May, and continue on the Dogger Bank and off the Texel during the summer months, recruiting their water and provisions as occasion may require. The having the command of this station will be productive of very good consequences, but the superiority must be decided, not equivocal.²

Western Squadron

The practice that has been pursued for these two summers past of supporting this squadron at the expense of every other important one is so contrary to good policy, that I hope it has not escaped the eyes of his Majesty's ministers. The idea of collecting a force to contend with the enemy in this quarter must be destructive in its consequence if any longer adhered to, and, after every effort, prove insufficient in the end. Select, therefore, from 15 to 20 sail of the fastest sailing two-decked ships, with two

force, as he would, by means of his frigates cruising to windward of Martinique, have stood a good chance of intercepting him; and if otherways, might have prevented a junction of the French and Spaniards to leeward by keeping post at Gros Islet.]

¹ [As may not be in a condition to cruise to the westward.]

² [America must depend on the West Indies if attacked from that quarter, and on the western squadron if threatened from Europe.]

or more of the new constructed fire-ships and six good frigates for this service ; put them under the direction of an officer capable of conducting them ; victual them to five months, and let them attend the motions of the combined fleet while at sea, and return to Torbay when they put into port.¹ Continue this practice during the summer. The consequences are obvious.

Convoys in Europe

Must collect early at the Nore, Spithead, and Cork, and be dispatched before the combined fleet take their station to the westward. The 44-gun ships and frigates are sufficient for this service, for as the enemies' views are confined to conquest, their line-of-battle ships will be naturally employed on it. The fifty-gun ships therefore should be taken for this employment and considered as line-of-battle ships.

The Quebec fleets at Cork and Spithead should sail so early in March as to be able to supply the back settlements ; the West Indies and America ones getting away at the same time, will leave no object of consequence in the Channel. But if the whole are detained till the enemy are at sea, the whole is obstructed ; the accumulation becomes so great at Spithead and Cork, that they cannot get to sea under a considerable time ; winds are lost ; the summer passes on ; the days shorten, and separation becomes unavoidable ; capture is added to our other disappointments ; and for want of punctual returns, the kingdom cannot find shipping enough for cruising on the business of government and trade.

¹ [Keep their water and provisions always complete, so as to seize any opportunity of advantage that may offer.]

If these outlines are judiciously filled up, they may be productive of success and prevent losses which otherways appear to me unavoidable. It must be observed that the success of every measure will depend on early consideration and preparation ; those above mentioned are important, and require skill, bravery, judgment and good conduct in whoever has the direction of them.

Instead of this last paragraph, the first draft has :—

[If this plan is approved, there is not a moment to lose in sending off the force for the West Indies, in ordering the line-of-battle ships from Jamaica to St. Lucia, and directing our homeward-bound fleets to make their passage to the northward, without touching at Leith or any other port on that side the island. If the system of starving every other service to make up an insufficient western squadron is still to prevail, we shall not only lose island after island in sight of fleets that are too weak to protect them, but see every possession belonging to Great Britain, and the land forces that are placed in them for their defence, seized by the enemy. If their fleet is coppered, as we are made to believe, and they appear in force to the westward, it will be hazardous to trust our three-decked ships in that quarter. Make use of them, therefore, where their force will be felt, to the northward and in the West Indies. By giving a superiority in these quarters, you may hope for success but cannot expect it by contending for a western squadron. Why this system has not been pursued these two years past, when the advantages of copper were, in a manner, confined to our own fleet, I am not able to say. The neglecting it has not only been the cause of every disgrace and loss that has happened, but apparently, the preservation of the enemy's fleet ;

and but for the circumstance of our own being coppered, would have ended in its annihilation. We have to thank God that it is yet entire, but do not let us flatter ourselves that it possibly can continue so under such conduct.

The fleet of England consists of upwards of 400 sail of pennants. It contains near 100,000 men. The management of such a force requires unremitted application, continued watching, great judgment, with the utmost extent of professional knowledge. If these are wanting, no success can possibly be expected. They have been wanting in almost every particular, and his Majesty, in consequence of it, has lost a great part of his dominions. Two campaigns more will ruin us in the west, and the east will follow.

The writer of this has no ill will to any men or set of men. He wishes well to his king and country, and will, under the guidance of providence, serve both to the best of his abilities and as long as he is able. He does not yet despair, because the fleet is entire ; but unless the cabinet will speedily propose to his Majesty to add a seaman to their assistance—unless the fleet is managed otherways than it has been, and the admiralty office restored to its original institution and maintains a proper authority over its officers, no human means can save this country. The game is almost over, and we have not a moment to lose.]

Sandwich to Middleton

[Holograph.]

Admiralty. 23rd February, 1782.

Dear Sir,—It is absolutely necessary that I should see you either this evening, between nine and ten, or to-morrow morning, at ten. Lord Mulgrave has some strong objections to the fitting

out the old men of war in the manner proposed ; and he wishes that we may talk this matter over together, before anything further is done in the business ; you will, therefore, be so good as to let me know, by the bearer, whether you will meet us in the board room this evening, at the hour above-mentioned, or call here to-morrow at ten, or any other hour that shall be more agreeable to you.

I am, most faithfully yours,
SANDWICH.

[*Holograph.*]

Admiralty. 24th February, 1782.

Dear Sir,—You must be aware how difficult it would be for me to force through a measure relative to the fitness of ships for sea, without the concurrence of the seamen who are members of the board of admiralty ; but I think I shall get over that obstacle by persuasion, which is the only way of bringing things to bear. I have nearly reconciled Lord Mulgrave to the measure, and I am to have him and Admiral Darby with me at one o'clock, when I hope to set them perfectly right. I must, however, hope for your assistance, which will make my task easier. You will easily conceive that Lord Mulgrave's chief objection is the carronades, to which he is a professed enemy ; he thinks that the ships might carry guns of lighter metal than their own, and be of more use than with carronades ; but this I shall resist, and I dare say get over if you assist me.

If you will call upon me to-morrow morning, I will send to Lord Mulgrave to meet us ; and a very little conversation together will, I am persuaded, finish the business ; for he is no longer warm about it, which he was at first. If you don't approve this proposal, will you agree that we should send to

you and some of your brethren, or by yourself, to come to us at a board to-morrow, to talk this matter over? I have no doubt but that, by adopting either of these modes, I shall settle the thing in the manner that both you and I wish to have it. I enclose a letter from Lord Amherst, which I don't much like, as it looks as if we should meet with more difficulties at the ordnance board than we were at first aware of. I suppose that in this calculation about the time when the carriages can be got ready, he does not carry with him the idea of employing a large additional number of hands. At all events I must see you to-morrow morning, as I have some other things to talk to you upon.

I am, most faithfully yours,
SANDWICH.

I am sorry you have written to Edinburgh to stop the carronades ; but if the plan is agreed to to-morrow, which I dare say will be the case, you must write again by express to forward the business.

[Lord Sandwich resigned office, with the North administration, on the 19th March, 1782, and was succeeded by Keppel, created a viscount on the 29th April.]

*MIDDLETON TO LORD GEORGE
GERMAIN*

[*Fair Copy. Autograph.*]

[P 1779.]

My Lord,—The many difficulties that have occurred during the late preparations, and the anxiety I felt from the shortness of the notice that was given me and the necessity we were under on that account of putting a stop to services equally if not more important in their consequences, induces me to entreat your lordship's attention for a few minutes.

It is a maxim I have laid down to myself, that when any part of a business is neglected nothing has been done; and therefore looking to one part of the service, and not to the whole, is neither judicious nor wise in the minister who conducts the war departments. I do not, my lord, mean to charge any particular office intentionally with misconduct; but having transacted a great deal of business with all, I am frequently a witness of delays that could not possibly happen if any degree of plan was laid down, and communicated in the first instance to those who are to be entrusted with the execution of it.

The mixing of different services, as has been the practice of late, must always produce confusion; and in the instance of Senegal¹ has put us to very

¹ The reference is, apparently, to the capture of Fort Louis and other settlements on the west coast of Africa, by the French under the Marquis de Vaudreuil, in February—March, 1779. See Beatson, iv. 454-7.

great difficulties. To avoid this, [in] the ensuing year—will it not be right to consider the operations of the winter campaign before the western squadron breaks up and provide accordingly? for unless some such plan is adopted early, it will be beyond the power of the admiralty and navy boards to comply with the requisitions that must naturally follow; whereas by a well digested plan, and giving timely notice to the heads of those offices who are to execute it, they make timely preparations and, by acting in concert, must probably ensure success. I will not trouble your lordship any further at present on this head, but shall take the liberty of doing so as circumstances may occur and render it necessary.

[? 1780.]

My Lord,—As your lordship is more immediately connected with foreign expeditions than any other of the king's ministers, I take the liberty of suggesting a few observations which have occurred to me on that subject. The method that has been practised of late in embarking troops at different ports distant from each other, will generally be attended with delay and probably occasion separation. Time and opposite winds are in such cases necessary to form a junction, and where these do not correspond so early as may have been expected, the natural consequence is disappointment and danger. For this reason I would exclude Chatham in all cases of expedition, and confine embarkations to the western ports. The same objections hold good against sudden equipments of every kind in the river Thames, as it is impracticable to get either stores or transports sent round at a short notice.

This, however, is not the only evil that attends

business being carried on in this dilatory way. The nature of the preparation, if left to the time for action, always creates conjecture ; the object of the expedition gets wind, the public papers carry the information to all parts of Europe, and the purpose of it is defeated before the execution is begun. I could give your lordship one or two instances of this in the present war.

To obviate these difficulties—I would propose ten gunboats, thirty bateaux in frame, and as many flat boats, with every necessary material to be provided at leisure and lodged at Portsmouth ; 10,000 tons of coppered transports, with a proportionate number of coppered victuallers, to be kept in constant readiness at Spithead, and as much provisions in store at Cowes as will serve 5,000 men for six months. To this preparation I would add every kind of artillery and ammunition that may be necessary for a distant expedition and lodged at the gun-wharf at Portsmouth. This preparation brings everything within a narrow compass and will enable you to embark six regiments in forty-eight hours. The opportunity of a favourable wind will be seized and the object of the expedition probably gained before the enemy is apprised of it ; but if left at large, in the way it has been, no good consequence can possibly be expected.

I have taken the liberty of mentioning these things to your lordship that unnecessary delays may be prevented in future expeditions ; for circumstanced as I am in conducting the business of an extensive executive office, I can only carry on the several services as they are communicated to me ; and if the necessary time for preparation is not given, it will be impossible for the office I am in, however willing, to comply with sudden requisitions ; and loaded as we are in winter with the equipment of

the fleet, and which ought in my opinion to precede every other consideration, it will be impracticable to undertake such a business as the last,¹ without material injury to it; whereas by preparing in time, every possible good consequence may be expected from it. The mode I have pointed out is liable to no objection but a little more expense, and which, if necessary, must be submitted to.

If your lordship concurs with me in this kind of reasoning I flatter myself you will procure the necessary authority for carrying it into execution.

MEMORANDA²

[*Endorsed*: Lord Keppel on his second interview, a few days after his being made First Lord of the Admiralty, before the patent was made out.]

[*Rough Copy*.]

March, 1782.

If the troops are to be removed from New York and Charleston, as reported by the newspapers, some preparations and arrangements will be necessary for that purpose. If both garrisons are to be removed at the same time, it will require at least 60,000 tons of transports; and if the ordnance provisions, and necessary stores are to be removed likewise, 25,000 tons more will be wanted for that purpose. The tonnage in hand does not amount to more than one-third part of this quantity, and it does not appear to me possible to procure

¹ This seems to refer to Rodney's relief of Gibraltar in January, 1780 (Beatson, v. 111).

² These memoranda, sometimes written out fair, but more commonly in the veriest scribble, on loose bits of paper, and without date, seem occasional notes for letters or conversations. Some are endorsed, but most bear no indication of their immediate purpose.

what is wanting to complete it in so short a time as may be necessary. On this supposition, might it not be proper to remove the garrison of New York first, and leave Charleston, as in a state of security, till the other is disposed of? In this case 40,000 or, at most, 50,000 tons will be sufficient, and which, with proper management, may be procured. If this measure is approved, it will be proper to send immediate orders to Charleston, Halifax, St. Lucia and Jamaica, to dispatch to New York all the transports and store ships in the service of the army at these ports, and for the commanding officer at New York to detain what is there, and to press such other as may be fit for that service; to convert the victuallers into troopships and provide as many casks as they are able for the accommodation of such as may arrive from other ports. Such transports as can be sent from England to be supplied with extra water casks, as well as provisions for the troops they are to take on board at New York. Such as are intended to carry provisions to Quebec or Halifax and now loaded at Cork and Spithead, to sail without loss of time, and after landing their provisions at these ports, to proceed immediately, under the same convoy, to New York, with as many water casks and materials for cabins as can be procured, for fitting them for troops. By these means I am of opinion a proper quantity of tonnage may be assembled at New York for the removal of that garrison by September; perhaps sooner, if no time is lost in pressing forwards the orders.

The next consideration will be to provide in time for the troops at the places they are intended to proceed to; and for this purpose it will be proper to state the preparations that are making for victualling the army abroad in the present year and

how they stand at present. The contracts for 1781 are for 15,000 at Canada, 40,000 at New York, 10,000 Charleston and its districts, and 600 Newfoundland, 5000 Nova Scotia, 7000 Leeward Island, 5000 Jamaica. Of the provisions of the year 1782, I conclude eight months' allowance at full rations are at New York and Charleston, and six months in the islands. Of the present year, six months wet provisions have sailed for the Leeward Islands and Jamaica from Cork, and as many months are under orders to proceed from that port for New York, with 2300 tons of oats, and convoy provided by the admiralty. The provision alluded to for Quebec, in the former part of this paper, are six months of last year's supplies which waited there for want of convoy, nine months wet of the present year's supplies to accompany it under convoy of the *Dædalus* and *Albemarle*, still in England, and nine months' dry provisions of this year's contract, ready at Spithead. These transports amount to at least 9000 tons, and are those which I mean to be sent to New York the moment they have delivered their cargoes at Quebec. No part, therefore, of the dry provisions, on the present year's contract, and but six months' of the wet for the West Indies, have yet proceeded. From this state of things it is to be considered whether the remaining provisions on the present year's contracts for the garrisons of New York and Charleston, and also the baggage and stores provided for those places, should not be sent where that army is intended to act, as the carrying them to America will otherways increase our difficulties. In this case, it will be necessary to stop the New York and Charleston ships now loaded at Cork, and dispose of the oats, and send them, as well as the provisions provided at Cowes, to the object of the

army's destination, and from thence to proceed to New York or Charleston, if wanted as transports, as soon as they have delivered their provisions. This measure will forward the removal of the garrison; and if not pursued, will, as it stands at present, very much impede it. It must always be kept in mind that a quantity of tonnage, equal to what is taken from the victualling service, must return to England and Ireland early in December to refit for the service of 1783.

Increasing of Transports

The only means I can propose is through the ordnance, or by embargo. If the latter should be thought expedient in order to procure men for the fleet, it will naturally throw a great number of ships into the naval service; and in this case it will be proper for the ordnance to desist from taking up at their advanced price. Should an embargo take place, it will be proper to exempt transports of all kinds, ships bringing and carrying stores for government and ships ready to proceed on their voyage, &c.

Means of providing Men for the Fleet

By embargo, making use of soldiers and—what is still more effectual—by calling on the parishes, by act of parliament, for not less than one young man each, and more in proportion to their sizes. This measure would immediately raise from 15 to 20,000 men, and without any degree of hardship, as the time of servitude might be limited to three years at most.

The convoys at present providing are one from Cork to Quebec, one from Spithead to Quebec, and one from Spithead to Halifax. These ships are

part of the Newfoundland squadron. Another convoy is providing and will sail soon for the West Indies, which carries a regiment on freight to Jamaica; and likewise one for New York. These, as far as I can recollect, are all that concern the services above mentioned.

Defence of the Medway

[*Rough draft.*]

[? May, 1782.]

Ships that may be fitted for the defence of the Medway, without interfering with what are under repair.

At Deptford

32.	Clinton	}	42 pdr. carronades
„	Thames		
„	Delaware		

At Woolwich

24.	Hyæna	32 pdr. carronades
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At Sheerness

	Hulk	68 pdr. carronades
60.	Conquistador	32 and 68 pdr. carronades
E. India Ship.	Greenwich	24 and 42 „ „
44.	Sapphire	42 pdr. carronades
	Adventure	32 „ „
24.	Hind	32 „ „
24.	Galatea	32 „ „

At Chatham

60.	Prince Edward ¹	32 and 68 pdr. carronades
36.	Mars	42 pdr. carronades

¹ Formerly Mars, captured from the Dutch, February 1781 (Beatson, v. 167).

32.	Venus	42 pdr. carronades
32.	Niger	42 " "
32.	Virginia	32 " "
24.	Camilla	32 " "

If these ships are commanded by active lieutenants or masters-and-commanders,¹ and allowed a small complement of men, and an addition of artillerymen or soldiers, used to guns, if attacked, they will prove a very formidable line of defence.

If the enemy attempt the Medway, the object will naturally be the destruction of Sheerness, which cannot be done by a *coup de main*. These ships, therefore, if properly stationed are in my opinion equal to [the present force of the Texel²] any force the Dutch can bring against them this year.

Under the present circumstances of our fleet, they will never attempt going up the Medway. If they did, it must, without a miracle in their favour, end in the capture of the squadron that attempts it.

15th July, 1782.

The combined fleet consisting of 29 sail have been seen as late as the 6th to the southward of Ushant ; and the Dutch squadron of

1 . . . 76	3 . . . 50
3 . . . 68	4 . . . 44
2 . . . 64	2 . . . 36
1 . . . 60	1 . . . 28
2 . . . 56	3 . . . 24
2 . . . 54	2 . . . 14

¹ Then the official designation of the officers more usually called 'commanders.'

² Deleted in MS.

have sailed from the Texel. Our West India fleets consisting of 100 sail from Jamaica under the Sandwich, Ajax and Intrepid, and 60 or 70 under the Robust, are probably within ten days sail of the Channel. Lord Howe is gone to the westward with 24 sail of the line, and 5 or 6 more are getting ready with all speed to follow him. The Baltic fleet will be ready to return from Elsinore the 27th.—The East India outward-bound fleet waits only for a wind; and upwards of 30 sail of victuallers for America and the Leeward Islands are in the same state.

On a review of this situation I cannot help regretting that the plan I gave in to Lord Sandwich, Lord Keppel and afterwards to Lord Shelburne was not better considered. By that measure, we might have prevented the Dutch from sailing; we should have secured an early return of our Baltic ships, and kept the North Sea open for the safety of our West and East India trade which ought to have been ordered north-about—vide plan.¹ In our present situation—it is not an improbable conjecture that the French are cruising to protect their own convoys and intercept ours, and that the Dutch have the same view by going north-about.

In this case Lord Howe should by no means engage the combined fleet unless an opportunity offers that bids fair to defeat them. A drawn battle will leave what ought to be his present object exposed to the Dutch and such ships of the combined fleet as may be fit for service, while ours are obliged to return to port to refit. If they succeed, peace is at a greater distance than ever—I mean a good one; a bad one must be made at any rate. His lordship, in my opinion, ought to attend the

¹ Blank in MS. Presumably that of 25th December (*ante*, p. 38).

enemy with such ships as he has, or can be sent to him ; and, if possible, prevent a junction between them and the Dutch to the westward. His principal object should be the covering of our own convoys, and afterwards the annoying the enemy. The Ripon and Belleisle with two frigates, in the absence of the Dutch, may bring home our Baltic fleet ; and the whole fleet of England, after that is effected, be at liberty till the middle or end of September, to act where occasion may require. If provisions are prepared in that time, Gibraltar may be relieved and your West India squadron strengthened. By calling in your 50-gun ships from being carriers of flags and convoys, you will make the fleet more formidable, and be able to face the enemy in all quarters. Strong squadrons may be appointed for annoyance and protection, and a sufficient force kept ready as speedily to succour any service that may be in need.

The sacrificing every object to an insufficient western squadron has been a principal cause of our ill success hitherto, and if not relinquished, must end in the loss of trade and colonies.

However, I am far from despairing. Our fleet is more numerous in ships of the line at this time than it ever has been ; it is increasing, while that of France and Spain must diminish. The means, under providence, are still in our power, if we have knowledge and order to direct them.

18th July, 1782.

1782.

July 22nd.—Obeyed a summons from Lord Keppel previous to my seeing the Secretary of State. He informed me of his plan of dividing the ships as soon as the enemy were gone in or quitted their ships—

10 Sail in North Sea,

10 Sail off Brest,

10 Sail relieve Gibraltar under Lord Howe, or otherways as might seem best. I asked if the treasury had prepared for this event, for that I had no notice of it, and if delayed too long could not be executed. He said Mr. Pitt was the person to settle this business and he would speak to him.

23rd.—Attended treasury in consequence of a summons, who put into my hands the articles of provisions &c. to be sent to Gibraltar and desired my opinion how it was to be supplied. I proposed taking the whole from the New York supply, as the overplus at that port and Charleston would admit of it; and the ships being loaded, I could select a proper number without discovery of the intention till the time of their sailing. For the mixed articles not supplied by contract, a vessel should be prepared immediately in the river Thames, where they could be best provided. Mr. Pitt presided: two other members and their secretaries present. A copy was to be sent to [me] of the different quantities of provisions as soon as copied, and I was to provide accordingly. P.M. Wrote Mr. Cherry,¹ to provide me with the particulars of the cargoes of the ships now loaded at Spithead for New York and Charleston, and to hasten the other ships loading for these ports. Directed a proper ship to be detained at Deptford till further order for the mixed articles, and wrote Mr. Orde² to furnish me as soon as he could with the supply, that I might provide accordingly; and sent a sketch of the orders necessary to be sent to the navy board for their justification, but to be directed

¹ George Cherry, afterwards a commissioner of victualling.

² Thomas Orde, at this time Secretary to the Treasury. Afterwards Chief Secretary for Ireland, and later still, Lord Bolton.

to me in private, so as not to be discovered till the service was performed.

25th.—In a conversation with Lord Keppel, he informed me of the general plan as to relieving Gibraltar, convoying Baltic trade home, removing troops from New York, sending them to the Leeward Islands, and keeping ships off Brest. No plan, however, is yet settled to carry these measures into execution; and what might be done, at this moment, with a few ships, cannot be executed, in a few weeks, with our whole force. The provisions, which is the bulky commodity, are ready to sail, and every other article might have been so, if ordered in time. But there appears to me to be no decision in the cabinet; the members are too many for conducting the national business. The first minister,¹ as far as I have seen, has not weight enough for his station, nor abilities to conduct it; as a man of business, he wants method and application; as a minister, he wants knowledge of the line he has undertaken; and being without weight, can carry no plan into execution. In short, I can get no fixed plan from any of the ministers, and therefore can lay none on my part, for preparation. Unhappy country!

Saturday, 27th.—Received treasury orders in writing with articles to be sent.

Monday.—Saw Mr. Burke who promised us them and settled with Captain Teer the ships to receive them. P.M. Received message from Lord Shelburne to wait on him, Tuesday evening, 9 o'clock.

¹ This must mean Lord Shelburne, who was nominated to the office on 1st July and had definitely accepted it by the 5th.

August, 1782.

Will it not be right to detach ships from Gibraltar¹ to the East Indies as well as the West? That country will be lost if it is not supported by ships of war. The measure will be concealed if executed in this way and much time gained.

Ought not every ship that can swim, from 90 guns to 40 inclusive, to be collected at the Gun-Fleet, or in the Downs and continue there (making necessary detachments for the protection of the trade) till the return of the fleet? On this ground, should the Sandwich, Russell, and Intrepid have been dismantled, and might they not have continued in commission till the return of the fleet, and made at least an appearance of force? Have any orders been sent to New York relative to Newfoundland, and may not some of the troops that have sailed from the Cape be intended to secure that conquest? As the campaign will be over by the return of the fleet, should not all your detachments for the support of your operations abroad be made from Gibraltar; instead of losing time by bringing them to England? As the want of the appearance of a force in the Downs or the Gun-Fleet will actually induce the Dutch to insult us, ought not the *Cato* to be detained and Admiral Parker command these collected ships till the fleet comes back? Ships going from Gibraltar will not make it necessary for the *Cato* to sail till December,² when she may accompany the first convoy, in room of one of the ships sent from Gibraltar. The *Hound* sloop, intended for the East Indies, will be able to carry any necessary information to that country.

¹ *Sz.* from Howe's fleet.

² The *Cato* actually sailed in October.

If the larger carronades had been adopted for the 40 gun ships, as recommended by the comptroller three years ago, they would have been a formidable force at this time against the Dutch. If these or larger guns can be furnished for them on the present occasion, it will add considerably to their consequence.

The ceremony of accommodating flags must give way to the necessity of applying every ounce of our force to its proper object. The clouds, my lord, that hang over us are heavy; we are not without the means (under providence) of removing them, if our plans are judicious, formed in time, and executed with vigour. War is a comprehensive business; the minister who conducts it must think of nothing else. Business knowledge, foresight, method, and application, are absolutely necessary; and if either are wanting, the minister will be found deficient. The past summer has been unprofitably spent; we have undertaken everything and executed nothing; whereas an early disposition and timely communication might have relieved Gibraltar.

[*Endorsed* : Sent to Lord Shelburne, 15th July, 1782.]

[*Copy, in Ramsay's writing.*]

Newfoundland

If the line claimed be to stretch north from Bonavista, till it comes around to Cape May, it includes three-fourth parts of the whole coast, and the most plentiful fisheries. Could we keep the coast from Cape May, east, till you come to the Straits of Belleisle at the north-east point, it would be the most convenient part for our European fisheries. In other respects, the south-west part

of Newfoundland would bring the French nearest to the New England people, between whom and them we need not be anxious if disputes arise.

If the French want any of the small islands, and it is not in idea to restore St. Pierre and Miquelon, suppose Isle of Sable were offered them? This would connect them immediately with the New England people, and if it otherwise answers their purpose, they will not be scrupulous of taking it because it may incommode their allies. It breeds a considerable number of cattle, and has anchoring ground around it, but I believe no port.

Between Cape May and Bonavista, to the eastward, or the south-east part of the island, lie our principal settlements, and therefore it cannot be meant that it should be claimed. If the French are to fish on the W. side of Newfoundland in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, how far up are they to be permitted? If limits be not set, they will carry on a contraband trade with Canada and the coast of Labrador.

West Indies

St. Bartholomew and the west half of St. Martin's are settled by a few poor French inhabitants, that have never been thought worthy of any civil or military establishment. When St. Kitts was taken, Bouillé did not think the French half of St. Martin's worthy of being re-taken, though he sent down to re-take the Dutch half; but obliged Shirley to grant the deputy English governor a new commission, to govern it as a British conquest, with the view of getting necessities the more easily for their new conquests. In time of war they are haunts for French privateers, and being mixed with our islands, produce many inconveniences. To us, they would be useful as

stock islands, for the advantage of St. Kitts and Antigua ; they would round in our Leeward settlements ; they are excellent stations in time of war, and would cut off disagreeable causes of disputes. There are lagoons or harbours in each island to shelter small ships in the hurricane months. French St. Martin's has a considerable proportion of good cane land, and has many English planters. To the French we may hold out that they are of no immediate value to France ; that they will keep up unnecessary causes of dispute if returned to France ; that they will be a retreat to the poor settlers that may be driven from Dominica ; that, considered as something of an equivalent for Dominica, the resigning of them to Britain will give the British ministry credit with the public, and help to make the concessions to France go down more easily.

Porto Rico is an uncultivated island that has never paid its establishment. It has one strong post, St. John's. The citadel is a peninsula, equal with, or overflowed at times by the water. The commanding approach by land lies at a considerable distance. The channel by which it may be attacked by sea leads almost in the wind's eye, and will admit only of frigates. Yet by all accounts, it is by much the most promising way of making an attack, to attack it by sea. The Spaniards, according to information, have been particularly careful to strengthen this post, and provide it with a good garrison.

Supposing it in our hands, and settled in the same manner in which St. Vincent, Dominica, and Tobago were settled, it would prove a curse to Great Britain only to allow two or three commissioners to wallow two or three years in luxury. The Spaniards will defend it for the honour of their

arms ; but it is so useless to them that they would give up no particular point to regain it. It would be much more advantageous to them to have every settler and slave it contains down to strengthen Cuba ; it serves them only (as the dog in the manger) to keep others from turning it to advantage. As a subordinate place, it should be reserved to follow other and more windward conquests.

Martinique is the key to all the Carib Islands. The nation that is in possession of it must command or overawe all the rest ; and the capture of it would be the re-capture of all our own islands. Perhaps the public have not an idea of the value of our own islands, that have been captured from us. From what may be called an accurate calculation

	£
The property in St. Kitts may be estimated above	4,000,000
In the same proportion, Grenada and the Grenadines exceed	6,000,000
And Tobago, St. Vincent, Dominica, Montserrat, and Nevis	5,000,000
	<hr/>
	£15,000,000

Here then is fifteen millions property, and an immense nursery of seamen to be recovered, together with an island (Martinique itself) of more intrinsic value than Porto Rico will be for fifty years to come. We may add also that Guadeloupe will follow the fate of Martinique. All these islands may be said to be fully cultivated, and the nation will reap the immediate fruits of their possession ; whereas Porto Rico will be a precarious drain for immense sums of money, before it can ever make any returns. Martinique has but one fortified place, as well as

Porto Rico. It should also be considered that there are numbers of British merchants and thousands of families whose properties are bound up in our own captured islands. Though, during war, the French allow them to draw some support from their possessions, yet that will cease when there comes a peace. For if these families become French subjects, they and their property will be lost to Britain; if there be the farce of stipulating for time to sell their possessions, it will answer no purpose, because the French have no money to buy; and there is so much better waste land in Hispaniola that the capture of our islands answers no purpose to the French but to weaken the mother country—Britain. A Frenchman will not buy worn-out lands of our planters if he can get fresh lands for nothing.

In having an eye on Martinique, it is particularly necessary to prevent provisions and stores from being thrown in. They usually sail from France about this time, and have arrived about September or October. In making an attempt on Martinique, there should be four places of debarkation—Trinity Bay, St. Anne's, the south and north sides of Fort Royal. A thousand men at Trinity, 1500 at St. Anne's, and a 1000 on the south side of the bay, near Cape Solomon, would be sufficient to make good a junction with the main body on the north side of the bay. By making the landing good at St. Anne's and Cape Solomon one night, perhaps part of the garrison might be drawn off to oppose them; and by landing the following night at Trinity Bay and the Fort Royal side, and filling the bay with cutters and armed boats, their retreat into the citadel might be cut off. Morne Garnier citadel is supplied with water from a spring said to be two miles above, in the mountain; this might easily be cut off. By taking post around it, the garrison

would be confined to salt provisions ; and the scurvy and their own stink would, within two months, force them to surrender. Abbé Reynal supposes when the citadel is finished, that it may then be able to hold out seven weeks.

The French left a garrison of fifty men at Montserrat. A detachment should be sent down to take possession of it, and some frigates and sloops should be stationed there to cut off the communication between Guadeloupe and St. Kitts. A small party of French has been generally stationed at Prince Rupert's Bay, where we built a battery of heavy guns for them. Two hundred men landed by night in Douglas Bay would easily surprise them ; this should also be another cruising station, to cut off the communication between Guadeloupe and Martinique. After the several debarcations at Martinique had united and taken post about Fort Royal, a strong detachment should be sent to take possession of St. Pierre ; and if a heavy fine were laid on that town, on account of the piracies committed by its inhabitants on our trade two years before the French armed in the present war, it is well able and deserves to bear it. Farther, Martinique is the only refitting port to windward of Hispaniola ; and when our troops had once posted themselves, or rather hutted themselves around Fort Royal, twelve sail of the line could post themselves so in the bay (especially if we could surprise Pigeon Island) as to be impregnable to any force coming on them by sea.

Nothing can be done with the Dutch settlements but to carry off their artillery, and blow up their batteries, so as to make them come-at-able by our frigates. Under the awe of our frigates, an annual tribute may be imposed on them, to be levied on a certain day. But they are unhealthy spots, and a few months would sweep off our garrisons ; and if

we pretended to hold possession of their rivers by frigates, our force must lie idle in them, and be—as lately¹—subject to be surprised by a superior force. If we take them with a view of holding them at a peace, the plan is injudicious ; because, being situated on the continent, they can never on the whole be possessed in security, and the slaves are constantly running away, and forming independent bodies all around the several settlements.

Providence, Bermudas, Rhode Island

In the design of abandoning North America, the safety of our West Indian, particularly our Jamaica convoys becomes an important object. The Leeward Island convoys pass near Bermudas. The Jamaica convoys, whether by the Windward passage or Gulf of Mexico, pass near Providence, which is now in the hands of the Spaniards, and is a station of the utmost consequence for us to recover at every hazard and expense. As soon as Charleston is abandoned, it will become a nest of privateers, that in a short time will infest all the channels of the Bahama Islands around Providence and Cape Florida. The inhabitants of Bermudas are exceedingly affected to the American cause, and our present garrison is weak. It should be immediately strengthened, and some frigates, under the command of an officer of application, should be stationed at it, before the Americans turn their views to it. The troops that have lately gone from Charleston to Jamaica, re-inforced by a sufficient number of that garrison, should be sent under an active officer to retake Providence, and garrison it strongly. It should then be made a station for protecting our homeward-bound Jamaica fleets ; and it and the Bermudas station would serve for

¹ 1st Feb., 1782 (Beatson, v. 460).

annoying the trade for provisions and naval stores, that the French and Spanish colonies will, immediately on our leaving it, extend with America. This trade will greatly preclude their necessity of supplying their colonies from home, and thus set loose more of their ships and men to act offensively against us. No time, therefore, should be lost in recovering and securing these two stations. The expedition to Providence may go on from Jamaica, in the hurricane season ; or if New York is to be abandoned, a strong detachment may be ordered from it. A small squadron of frigates (none exceeding 32 guns on account of its shallow water), brigantines, and cutters should be stationed at Providence. Both that and Bermudas should have a regular supply of provisions kept up for the use of the garrison and cruisers. If both these places be not secured, it will be impossible to protect our West Indian trade in any manner ; because the American privateers will be able to annoy them immediately, not only from these two places, but from all their numerous rivers and ports, during the extent of their voyage along the coast of America.

If we abandon America without a convention, we have no check against their ravages on our trade. It does not appear that we have left ourselves a power of defending ourselves against their attacks. If we had seized and garrisoned Rhode Island strongly, we might have given them their option of calling in their privateers, or having their sea-coast laid waste. And it, otherwise, would have been an excellent station for checking their privateers. Or might they not have been induced to give up their privateering for the possession of Charleston and New York ?¹

¹ The stupidity and folly of our government in abandoning these ports, as well as the western territory to the States, without

MIDDLETON TO LORD SHELBURNE

[*Endorsed*: Intended for Lord Shelburne, but not sent.]

[*Rough draft*.]

11th September, 1782.

My Lord,—I received the treasury order to provide for Gibraltar on the 26th July, and the winds continued to the westward till the 4th of this month. Forty days have been therefore allowed for preparation. On the 5th the wind was settled to the eastward, and sufficiently strong for Admiral Milbanke to quit his station off the Texel and pass by Deal on that day. On the 6th our river ships arrived at Spithead. Why the whole did not meet off the Isle of Wight on the 6th and sail immediately is a matter of enquiry. If they had, their passage to Gibraltar would have been secured, and their arrival almost certain by the 20th. The wind has now changed, and the consequences, in every point of view, are fatal.

Can a nation whose public business is managed in this way possibly succeed? Is it not necessary to make enquiry in the cabinet by calling for returns from the ships' officers, and see where the fault lies. Every neglect of service since I have been in office has originated in London. If the public officers, on whose orders every preparation and movement depends, are not diligent, regular and punctual, it is of little consequence what your admirals and generals are. I have endeavoured to enforce this to great men by every means in my power, for these four years past, but nobody will

any equivalent or compensation, has often been commented on. No doubt the government, from party motives, were exceedingly anxious to patch up a peace with the States; but possibly they also thought that, by an undue liberality, they would stir up jealousy between the Americans and their French allies.

understand it. I must therefore take the liberty of repeating to your lordship that discipline, preparation, execution, success, and even peace depends on early determination in the cabinet, and punctuality in the public offices. It is said our constitution is not well calculated for war. I know of no reason why, but because men cannot be found to attend to business.

This country must sink if they¹ are not properly filled and the heads of them made responsible. This last business is the worst managed of any in the whole war. What will not be said in parliament? A private enquiry is certainly necessary on the present occasion. By finding out where the fault lies, it may prevent it in future. It would have a better effect, if those who have been remiss were dismissed.

MEMORANDUM²

[*Fair copy. Autograph.*]

Idea of a Peace on the footing on which things stand, September 25, 1782.

If it shall be thought necessary to give up Gibraltar to the Spaniards, it will very much lessen public complaints if it is done by way of bargain and not by constraint. The fortifications, therefore, should be estimated, a sum of money paid for them, Minorca restored and made a free port, Porto Rico and all its surrounding islands given in full sovereignty to Great Britain, the settlements on the Musquito shore and in the bay of Honduras restored

¹ Sc. the public offices.

² It would appear that this was drawn out for the consideration of Lord Shelburne. There is no evidence that it was sent to him; and indeed the unusual neatness of the MS. suggests that this is the actual copy intended for Shelburne's perusal.

in their former situation, Pensacola and New Orleans given up, Providence to be restored, and Augustine kept in our possession. These two to be made strong posts and considered as outworks to protect the Jamaica trade. Providence to be made a free port for American, Spanish and French vessels, but to exempt the trade from any control of the military governor. Dominica is to continue in the hands of the French and St. Lucia given up; in return, they must restore Tobago, Grenada, the Grenadines, St. Vincent, and the Leeward Islands, Montserrat, Nevis, and St. Christopher's; but indeed most of our islands are so easy to be retaken, and the force coming from America so superior to that object, if thought inferior to Martinique or Guadeloupe, that, if we were to retake them, we might make peace with our hands full, and make better terms for ourselves in other quarters. It must be great mismanagement, with the force we have at sea, and the superiority we might have by arming our 40-gun ships and frigates with the larger carronades, if we allowed the enemy to make new expeditions against them. Let us not therefore demand that of our enemies which we have the power of giving to ourselves. Newfoundland may, without injury to the public or individuals, be settled as the place mentioned by your lordship; but in return for that indulgence and giving up Pondicherry in an open ruined state, as well as submitting to their keeping Dominica, they should assist us with their interest with Spain in procuring Porto Rico, and by that means recompense our Dominica planters, as they will never be able to sell their lands and buildings to French adventurers who have neither money, ability nor necessity to purchase them.

The settlements on the coast of Africa to return to their former masters; but if the French are to

have the river Gambia, Goree should go with Senegal. As the French and Spaniards reap the greatest benefit from the unnatural trade in slaves, and which in the case of the former has done more to enrich that nation¹ and increase its navy than all other causes put together, it should be well considered how far it might be proper to confine our merchants to the supplying of our own plantations only. To make a temporary restriction is reasonable, because our sugar islands have been greatly injured and their slaves diminished during the war; and if a rivalry in the purchase of slaves be allowed between them and foreigners, they will never recover themselves, nor can Porto Rico ever be properly settled.

In the East Indies, concessions to be entirely confined to the neighbourhood of Pondicherry; for, if the French be admitted again in Bengal, such is their superior address and honour for their monarch compared to the unfeeling sentiments of our pilfering thieves, that they will very soon embroil us with the neighbouring nations and worm us out of all our advantages in that country; advantages which, though unjustly come by, are now become necessary for our existence as a great nation.

There seems not the smallest reasons for making concessions to the Dutch. I should therefore be for only restoring all their possessions in the East Indies except Trincomalee harbour, and restraining them from the fisheries on our own coasts. As our territories are so extensive in India, and it is necessary to awe them with a squadron in peace as well as war, and we have no harbour on the Coromandel coast, this harbour should be kept at any rate; and as our concessions to France will probably be more than an equivalent, at the end of the war, for what is remaining in their hands, it should be a condition

¹ Cf. the very different opinion expressed *post*, p. 281.

that they insisted on the Dutch ceding this harbour to us. In short, no concession should be made to any party, but what should be considered as made to the whole ; the easiest, however, and best way is to retake and demolish whatever we want to be returned, and then make such an equal peace as may best promise to prevent future wars. In this light the giving back Gibraltar may be considered as dissolving the family compact and admitting us to trade with Spain and its colonies on the same terms as France. Such conditions may still make it more palatable to the nation at large. Whatever peace is made with America should comprehend the fullest indemnity, restoration of property, and liberty to the friends of Great Britain.

Your lordship will observe, that the idea of a peace has insensibly drawn after it hints on the propriety of the several exchanges and their natural consequences to our revenues and trade. If Martinique and Guadeloupe cannot be safely attacked and the probability of a peace at hand, our troops cannot be better employed than in retaking our own small islands and Porto Rico. The name of an island returned by a treaty makes a great sound, and will claim something valuable in return ; whereas a few hundred men, properly supported by ships of war, would recover Tobago, St. Vincent, Montserrat, and Nevis, and even Grenada and St. Christopher's would not be a work of much time or labour ; and, in our present situation, every operation and every concession should be considered, as it will affect our revenues and trade on the return of the peace. The sugar islands are the best and surest markets for our staple commodities, and the most productive of all our colonies. They are the easiest sources of our revenues, and being all private property should, if possible, be sacred to a government, that cannot

possibly make the owners any recompense if surrendered at a peace.

I have not touched upon Canada or Nova Scotia with the country adjacent, as I take it for granted they are meant to be kept as ports, as well as our trade and supplies for certain articles of naval stores. To conclude: Let us look to war and a proper exertion as the best means to make a profitable and solid peace.

MIDDLETON TO LORD SHELBURNE

[*Copy. Autograph.*]

14th October, 1782.

My Lord,—I need not repeat to your lordship the anxiety I must naturally feel while the papers relative to the admiralty and dockyards continue out of my possession. The return of the first to its place in the office is so absolutely necessary as a voucher for paying the money, that we cannot do without it; and the preservation of such papers has been thought so essential, and has hitherto been so complete, that the regular vouchers and authority for the expenditure of all public money in the naval branch, since its first institution, are to be found in it. The dockyard information, though necessary for your lordship's plan, is so involved with private correspondence, that I cannot feel easy while the most distant chance remains of its falling, by any accident, into any other than your lordship's hands. My altercation with the noble lord¹ who is the subject of it was on public ground, and notwithstanding I found myself obliged to contend with him on such occasions, yet as a private man, and as a duty incumbent on me in return for his taking in good part whatever remonstrance I made respecting

¹ Lord Sandwich.

the public service, I think myself obliged to preserve for him every mark of attention, and do him every act of friendship in my power.

The navy office, my lord, is the record of all naval information; and every part of it that can be turned to public account shall ever cheerfully be supplied by me; but it is absolutely necessary to be particularly careful that no chasm be left in the collection; and after the papers have been perused, that they be without loss of time returned to their proper office; and I would, in the most possible delicate manner, insinuate¹ that it would be entirely departing from that line of conduct that I have most religiously imposed on myself respecting the public, to supply anything that might be diverted to internal political purposes. My object is altogether national. Where reformation is the view, your lordship will oblige me by making me useful; but I should lose my own esteem, were I, in the present state of things, even by accident, made to act a more contracted part.

I am, with great respect,
your lordship's most humble
and most obedient servant,
CHARLES MIDDLETON.

MEMORANDUM

Thoughts on the Campaign of 1782

[*Fair copy in Ramsay's hand.*]

By detaining the reinforcement that sailed with Sir G. Rodney till the whole was ready, Sir S. Hood was kept inferior to the enemy and St. Kitts was lost. Had they sailed separately, he would

¹ A remarkable anticipation of Mr. Chucks.

have been enabled to have attacked De Grasse before the arrival of Vaudreuil and would have saved the island.

Orders have been sent out for abandoning our posts in America, without preparing transports for the service, or determining how or where to employ them, or making any bargain in favour of the friends of government for the surrender of the posts.

Frigates are the hands and eyes of a fleet. All the operations of our fleet have generally been crippled and confined for want of a proper number to attend it. This has arisen from bad management in the stationing of frigates; particularly by accumulating unnecessarily a great number of them at Jamaica, and allowing the admirals on that station to detain them, for cruising for prizes and making of officers.

The Baltic fleet was not attended to in time. While Lord Howe's fleet was getting ready for its western cruise, a strong detachment should have been sent off the Texel and kept there till the arrival of the convoy, and to prevent the Dutch from sending out their foreign convoys. As matters are now situated, the only thing left to be done is to collect to the eastward all the ships as fast as they arrive from abroad or can be got ready in the ports, and send them off the Texel with all the remaining fireships, to awe the Dutch till the Baltic convoy shall arrive.

While ever we attempt to make up a western squadron with a view to cope with the combined fleets, every other service must submit to that. We might have a fleet of observation to consist of 15, 21, or 27 sail, as circumstances will admit, and then provide fully for the other services. By our fleets being all coppered, they can play round the enemy, can engage any detached ships, and

can bring their force into such compact order as to check every attempt that could be made on them by the enemy. Such a fleet will always be able to protect the homeward-bound convoys, especially if, on any critical occasion, the convoy be ordered round the north of Ireland, and according to circumstances, be made to go round the Orkneys or return south by St. George's Channel, and pass between Scilly and the main. If the London trade go round the Orkneys we must have a fleet in the Downs to awe the Dutch. The Bristol, Liverpool, Lancaster, and Glasgow trade can run little risk in getting safe to their respective ports from the north of Ireland. But there should be a sufficient number of frigates with the convoy to see the ships of the different ports into safety.

After the victory of the 12th April, it would appear that much time had been misapplied by continuing cruising for the French fleet after they had got into port. After suffering, as they had done, in action, they could not possibly sail in six weeks. That time should have been employed by us in refitting at Jamaica, keeping frigates cruising off the Cape to give intelligence of their progress ; whereas by [our] cruising while they were refitting, they were able to sail while we were obliged to remain in port refitting, and thus got the start of us to America. It appears also that an excellent opportunity of recovering at least several of our small islands by the troops from Carolina was lost for want of a naval force to co-operate with them at Barbados and the Leeward Islands.

In the relief of Gibraltar much time has been lost and much hazard run, by not ordering in time proper stores and supplies to be got ready at Spithead, and by not committing the preparation of the whole to one particular board, or rather one

man acquainted with sea affairs, that might expedite the whole and make everything co-operate.

Enquiry should be made what unnecessary delays have been made in accelerating the arrival of succours in the East Indies, because, having begun with the superiority there, we could balance our disasters in the west only by keeping it up, and making a proper use of it.

Enquiry should be made into Captain Trollope's account of the easiness of his capture of the French frigate [*Hébé*];¹ and if, on examination, it be found that carronades may be depended on, why should not orders be sent down to that company to prepare a sufficient number of them for our 40 and 50 gun ships, that we may have a squadron of them commanded by young, intrepid officers, and protected by two or three heavy ships, to oppose next year to the Dutch? On this resolution being taken, orders should be sent out to collect from the different stations all such ships of these rates as can be spared, and if these be not sufficient, old East Indiamen should be bought up and fitted out. In doing this not a week should be lost.

[The remainder is a rough draft in Middleton's hand.]

Suffering Admiral Kempenfelt to sail with so small a force, when the ships fitting for the West Indies and others from the Downs might have joined him with advantage to other services, was an error that not only prevented that admiral from attacking

¹ Captain Henry Trollope, in the *Rainbow*, an old 44-gun ship experimentally armed with carronades (68-, 42-, and 32-pounders), captured the *Hébé*, a new 38-gun frigate, after a barely nominal resistance, on 4th September, 1782. It was said that the French captain was morally subdued by the size of the shot which smashed the *Hébé's* wheel. It is certain that he was broke by sentence of court-martial and ordered to be imprisoned for fifteen years.—Lacour-Gayet, ii. 388.

Mr. Guichen to advantage, but lost us the island of St. Christopher's. There were many blunders which concurred to this disappointment; and had a man of less activity than Admiral Kempenfelt been appointed to command, the Squadron would not have got to sea in time for any service, nor have ventured an attack in the face of so superior an enemy. This happened under the former administration, and on the part of the admiral was the most judicious attempt, except St. Christopher's, of the war.

Present Ministry

It was an unfortunate event for the king's service that the change [of ministry] had not taken place in December instead of March, as it would have given the new ministers more time for consideration, and fuller means for carrying their own plans into execution. The resolution of evacuating New York, Charleston, and Georgia, and neglecting the previous steps for carrying it into execution, can only be accounted for in the sudden change that took place, and having no man in the public offices conversant with a business of that kind. With every means that could be procured in this country, the whole together was impracticable; and for want of plan, no part has been effectually carried into execution. The consequence of this error has been the loss of a whole year in the removal of these garrisons and of active measures in the West Indies. The disappointments that will attend it in the want of victuallers and transports in the ensuing year have not yet appeared, but will prove very material if not attended to early. I have urged it more than once under your lordship's administration, and continually under Lord North's, that success in war must depend on judicious plans

and early preparation ; where these are wanting, disappointment and delay must ensue. Finding fault, and throwing blame for errors that are unavoidable where there is no plan, may create ill temper and confusion, but will never remedy it. I have frequently observed my own coachman to whip his horses for faults of his own committing, in order to deceive me and exculpate himself. It is exactly the same in an administration who do not foresee and give time for preparation. I am the more particular on this subject, because I know from experience that the failure of almost every service in the present war, and the loss of every colony, has been owing to it.

Evacuating America

Sir C. M. gave in a plan for removing the troops, &c., in a few days after the change took place ; and had any attention been paid to it, the whole of the New York garrison would have been moved this year, and Charleston early in the ensuing one ; but suffering three months to elapse without coming to any resolution on it, and permitting the victuallers and transports to lay unnecessarily at Spithead, and after all to sail for Quebec, Canada and the West Indies, without any view to an object of this magnitude that had been ordered to be carried into execution, is scarcely credible. Sending out, or not preventing the navy board from sending provisions and stores to garrisons that were to be removed, and by that means adding to the difficulty and losing the use of the transports when the scarcity of shipping would admit of no recruit at home, must appear equally extraordinary. From these circumstances, and not sending early information to the commanding officer in the Leeward

Islands for providing stores, there are between 2000 and 3000 tons of shipping lying at this time, loaded with provisions, at Charleston; 5700 at New York, and in all probability 7000 at the Leeward Islands; so that we have 18,000 tons of shipping lying idle, at a time when we do not know where to get a single ship; and 12,000 of them have been sent to New York and Charleston with provisions after a resolution was taken to abandon them, and with a quantity in store equal to 15 months' consumption.

These, my lord, are stubborn facts, and would discredit the cabinet if they were suffered to come before the public. It is absolutely necessary that a first minister in this country should have the whole detail of what is requisite for carrying on the war, or place men at the head of the executive offices, who can be depended on; no measure of the cabinet can be looked upon as fixed till the secretary of state's orders have been given for carrying them into execution, nor is it safe for any office to act without authority.

The first step towards evacuating America ought to have been an enquiry into the means for carrying it into execution, and to form a plan upon those means. New York, therefore, ought to have been the garrison first moved, as being the larger port and requiring a great number of men to defend it. Charleston, as being strong, and defensible with a smaller number, and lying convenient for defending our West India trade, and nearer to the islands, should have remained for another year. On this plan, and an early disposition of the transports and the British troops encamping without New York, the whole of the loyalists, stores, provisions, cannon and baggage might have gone in the first embarkation to Halifax; the Hanoverians, Hessians, &c.,

to Quebec, Newfoundland and Halifax ; and the transports been back in time for conducting the British to the West Indies. The provisions, in this case, would have been sent out to the Leeward Islands for the use of the troops, and the transports returned to America empty for the removal of the garrisons and stores, instead of going out to add to our difficulties, and lying now in America useless, to the mortification of the general, and under a heavy and unnecessary expense to the public. By following this plan, Charleston and Savannah might have been an easy measure for the ensuing spring ; our whole transports would have been at liberty, and no complaints subsisting of leaving the loyalists to the mercy of an enraged enemy.

The remedy is difficult, and we are in a worse situation now for removing these garrisons than we were in last year. The only means I can propose is to send as much provisions from New York and Charleston to Halifax, Quebec and Newfoundland with the Germans, as will subsist these garrisons without any further supply from Europe till August 1784 ; and the transports to return immediately afterwards to New York if necessary. This measure will lessen the difficulties, and probably enable us to move the garrison of Charleston likewise in the ensuing year. It will throw the use of at least 12,000 tons of transports into our hands, which must otherways be called home and employed early in carrying out provisions from hence. It will be the means of saving the provisions now lying at New York and Charleston, and very much facilitate the removal of men and stores. The ships now loaded at these ports, and for whose cargoes no store room can be found, ought to move as soon as the season will admit ; and what is not wanted for the northern garrisons will of course accompany

the British to the West Indies. The state of the stores will admit of these arrangements, and we shall, in consequence of it, have but one object to provide for in the West Indies, and save much money to the public in provisions as well as transports. This is the best opinion I can give for obviating present difficulties as to America and the state of the transports.

Naval Service

The making an insufficient western squadron the first object, as was usual under the last administration, has been attended with many inconveniences and might have proved fatal to Gibraltar as well as our Baltic fleets. These dangers, I trust, are removed, but should be guarded against in future. By not granting an early convoy to the outward-bound Baltic trade, and keeping possession of the North Sea till their return in July, they will not be able to make more than one voyage—to the great injury of trade and of the public revenue. The Dutch have had, in that time, an opportunity of carrying out their East and West Indian convoys, and which in the East Indies may be felt to our cost. The Gibraltar relief has been delayed, the East and West India convoys prevented from sailing, and the whole trade of the island (accidental arrivals excepted) at a stand for at least two months. These convoys, when the combined fleet was to the westward, should have sailed through the St. George's Channel, and which might have been accomplished without danger while Lord Howe was to the westward. The ships that were injudiciously sent after him should have been employed in bringing home the Baltic trade, and the whole ordered back sooner than they were, to prepare for Gibraltar.

It should be laid down as a maxim not to be

departed from : That unless the trade is dispatched before the month of May, they will not only be detained afterwards by westerly winds, but by the enemy. That unless the outward-bound Baltic trade have an early convoy out, they cannot make two voyages, and which the merchants depend on and time their ships accordingly. That unless the East and West Indies are reinforced with ships of war to sail from hence in the winter, they will be too late to act in season, and give unnecessary advantages to the enemy. That one ship more than the enemy will often ensure success, when one less will occasion a drawn battle, the loss of a place, and a disabled squadron. That an active, judicious officer, with a coppered fleet, will destroy an enemy, when an injudicious one will suffer it to escape and be ourselves disabled. That forethought and preparation are absolutely necessary to ensure success. That the admiralty office is the main engine of the war ; that discipline, execution, economy and even revenue depend on the management of it. That suffering the transport service to fall into the management of the ordnance and victualling has been a source of great abuse and extravagance, as well as disappointment in service. That the neglecting the use of the larger carronades, when so evident in its advantages to common sense, has been attended with many bad consequences ; whereas using them in our ships of forty guns and frigates would have enabled us to face and outnumber the enemy in all parts of the world. That obstructing the progress of an invention so formidable against the enemy as appears from the capture of the *Hébé* by the *Rainbow*, is criminal and ought to be taken notice of. That nothing can extricate us out of our present difficulties, but public virtue, sound principles, an unremitting application.

COMMISSIONER LAFOREY TO MIDDLETON

INTRODUCTORY

John Laforey, who was promoted by Boscawen to the rank of captain on 26th July, 1758, for his gallant service at the siege of Louisbourg, where, as a commander, he led a detachment of boats into the harbour, burnt one of the enemy's ships of the line (the *Prudent*) and brought out another (the *Bienfaisant*), and had since served with credit—even in Keppel's inglorious action off Ushant, was on 26th November, 1779, appointed commissioner of the navy at Barbados and the Leeward Islands, and 'commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels which may be at any time in such port in any of the said islands where you reside, when there shall be no flag officer or senior captain present';¹ to reside 'at Antigua or such other of the above mentioned islands as you may occasionally find necessary.' The wording of the order—which, it will be seen, was afterwards the cause of much discussion—was remarkable. It was certainly unusual, though not absolutely exceptional; for the order to Captain, afterwards Admiral Sir Richard Hughes, appointed commissioner at Halifax, on 2nd June, 1778, ran in almost identical terms:

'We judge it will greatly forward his Majesty's service to appoint you commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels which may at any time be in the said port, when there shall be no flag officer or senior captain to yourself present. We do, therefore, hereby appoint you (in the absence of a flag

¹ Public Record Office, *Admiralty Commission and Warrant Book* vol. xix.

officer or senior captain) commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels which shall from time to time be at Halifax.'¹

The point afterwards raised, not only at Antigua by Captain Thompson, but in England by Lord Howe, when first lord of the admiralty, was that the order—which assuredly was not a commission—did not invest Captain Laforey with military rank. That, by its wording, it professed to do so cannot be doubted; and we must endorse Laforey's contention that—'If that power authorised the holder of it to command military men, it must, of course, be a military commission; if it was not perfect in all its forms, the defect rests with the admiralty and not with the officer who acted under it, who—if his lordship determines the contrary—may stand fair to find his promotion in Newgate'; to be, in fact, rewarded with a halter in lieu of a ribbon or star. None the less, it must appear certain that Howe's view, as Thompson's before him, was correct. Laforey was not on full pay; he did not belong to any ship; he was not 'in or belonging to the fleet'; he was not amenable to a court martial, and his ordering or presiding at a court martial was unquestionably illegal.

We do not know why these unusual orders were given; but amid the corruption which polluted all branches of the public service in the eighteenth century, it is always permitted to suspect some sinister motive, such as Laforey more than hints at (p. 130), or to which, some thirty years earlier, Admiral Medley, in the Mediterranean, distinctly attributed the unfriendly action of Sir William Rowley.²

Every one, on reading these letters from Antigua, will be struck by the curious coincidence of their anticipating, by a few years, the same difficulty that was raised at the same place by another captain of the same ship. The nominal though really invalid difference between the two cases was that Laforey had the admiralty order behind that of Rodney to hoist a broad pennant, and Thompson was putting himself in opposition not only to the commander-in-chief but to the admiralty; Moutray, on the other hand,

¹ Public Record Office, *Admiralty Commission and Warrant Book*, vol. xix.

² MSS. of Lady Du Cane (*Hist. MSS. Comm.*), pp. xv, xvi.

had no such order from the admiralty, though we may feel sure that Hughes, in directing him to hoist a broad pennant, was misguided by the illegal order which he himself had had at Halifax. It is from the light which it throws on the familiar episode in Nelson's early career that this discussion derives much of its interest; for now that captains or admirals superintendent, on full pay, have taken the place of resident commissioners of the dockyards, such a clash of authority is no longer possible.

Laforey's letters to Middleton are all holographs.

Antigua. 8th August, 1780.

My dear Friend,—I wrote to you by the convoy on the 29th ult. ; and as I understand that a frigate is to be dispatched from the fleet, which is now at St. Kitts, in a very few days, I take this opportunity of transmitting to you some papers by which you will see that we have a young man¹ here bold enough to stand forth and avowedly refuse obedience to a commission² given by the lords of the admiralty and to deny their right or power to issue such. If I did not know him in other respects to be properly in his senses, I should conclude him insane. The articles of war, read merely as his horn book, would surely have taught him otherwise. I was once at the pains of remonstrating with him; but if I am not misinformed, there are more gentlemen in the fleet who talk his language, and probably have set him foremost in the field where they may not think it so prudent to expose themselves. I have noticed

¹ Charles Thompson, captain of the *Boreas*, was scarcely less than forty, and a captain of eight years' seniority. He is now, perhaps, best remembered as the man who, when a vice-admiral, 'presumed to censure' Lord St. Vincent for hanging four mutineers on a Sunday; but this, as will be seen later (*post*, pp. 414 sq.), was not the first time in which he had 'presumed' in a similar way.

² The point, of course, was that there was not a commission, in the naval sense.

a class of gentlemen here who, through the rapidity of preferment that has flowed within these few years in America and in these seas, having most unexpectedly started from petty officers and lieutenants to the rank of post captains in ships of the line and capital frigates, are now so intoxicated with power that they appear to have risen in their own minds above all subordination. Of this I have experienced very unpleasant instances since I have been placed in command here. I have called upon the admiral, as you will observe, for his support, but how he will act on it I can't form the least judgment, so extraordinary and unaccountable is he in every other transaction. I wait only for his decision upon it to lay the whole before the lords of the admiralty, who will very soon make this gentleman sensible of what their power can do. I have in the course of my service seen some of the first officers in the navy receive orders from and shew due obedience to the superintendent of a port in the person of a commissioner of the navy; but never before did I see an officer start up and say to this effect—The admiralty have no right to give that commission; it is not legal, and I will not obey it. For my part I can see no difference between this and the men refusing to heave up the anchor upon the pretence of a supposed grievance (such has ever been my idea of discipline) except that mutiny or disobedience among seamen seldom happens until the can has gone briskly round in the evening, and this transaction passed at 9 in the morning. I am indeed not surprised to be held rather cheap in the opinion of such persons as I have described, in a fleet whose commander has not shewn the least attention to give weight or consequence to the station I am placed in. Upon his first arrival I enclosed him a copy of my commission and instructions from the admiralty

(both which I shewed him at Portsmouth before we sailed) ; in his answer to which, he assured me his ships should have orders to put themselves under my command as they came here, and sent me at the same time orders to put myself under his ; but among the numbers he has sent to this port, not one has ever produced an order from him to that purpose ; he has even sent the very gentleman now in question off this port, with orders to take a ship from under my command away, without giving me the least notice thereof ; so that I am not surprised gentlemen of the stamp I have described should be little disposed to conduct themselves subordinately to an officer their admiral treats with so little consideration. I have nothing new to add. My best respects attend on all at home ; and I am, with great truth, my dear Middleton,

Most faithfully yours,

JOHN LAFOREY.

Upon revising my letter, I observe I have twice made the same observation ; but it must go ; I have not time to write it over again.

Enclosure No. 1

*Rear-Admiral Hyde Parker to Commissioner
Laforey*

[Copy. Signed.]

By Hyde Parker, Esqre., Rear-Admiral of the Red and Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels at Barbados and the Leeward Islands.

In pursuance of directions from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty :

You are hereby required and directed, upon your arrival at Antigua, to take under your com-

mand all his Majesty's ships and vessels upon that station, giving such orders for the protection of the islands, the security of his Majesty's subjects and their trade, and for the annoyance of the enemy, as in your judgment will best answer these ends, and according to the exigencies of the service. For which this shall be your order.

Given under my hand on board his Majesty's ship Princess Royal, Carlisle Bay, Barbados, 19th February, 1780.

H. PARKER.

To John Laforey, Esqre., &c. &c., at Antigua. By command of the Admiral, Jas. McI. Skaith.

Enclosure No. 2

Sir George Rodney to Commissioner Laforey

[Copy. Signed.]

By Sir George Brydges Rodney, Bart., Admiral of the White and Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty's ships and vessels employed and to be employed at Barbados, the Leeward Islands and the seas adjacent.

You are hereby required and directed to take under your command all such of his Majesty's ships and vessels as may be ordered to Antigua to clean or refit; as likewise all such of his Majesty's ships as I think it necessary to station at the Leeward Islands. You are to give them from time to time such orders as you may think necessary for his Majesty's service, and employ them for the protection of the said Islands, and the security of the trade of his Majesty's subjects, and the annoyance of the enemy, in such a manner as in your judgment

will best answer those ends and according to the exigencies of the service.

Given under my hand on board his Majesty's ship, Sandwich, Gros Islet Bay, St. Lucia.
10th April, 1780.

G. B. RODNEY.

John Laforey, Esq., &c. &c. &c.
By command of the Admiral,
William Paget.

Enclosure No. 3

Commissioner Laforey to Captain Charles Thompson
[Copy. Signed.]

English Harbour. 4th August, 1780.

Sir,—Having signified to me this day, upon your arrival with his Majesty's ship *Boreas*, under your command, that you would not submit to receive orders from me as commander-in-chief at this port, as it is necessary that your declaration should be given in writing, I now enclose you orders to put yourself under my command, which you will please to signify your acceptance or rejection of from under your hand.

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

JOHN LAFOREY.

Captain Thompson, Commander of his
Majesty's ship *Boreas*.

Enclosure No. 4

Laforey to Captain Thompson

[Copy. Signed.]

By John Laforey, Esq., Commander-in-Chief (in the absence of a flag officer or

senior captain) of his Majesty's ships and vessels which shall from time to time be at Barbados or the Leeward Islands.

By virtue of power and authority in me vested, you are hereby required and directed to put yourself under my command, and follow all such orders and directions as you shall receive from me for his Majesty's service. For which this shall be your order.

Given under my hand at English Harbour
in Antigua, this 4th day of August, 1780.

JOHN LAFOREY.

Captain Charles Thompson, Commander of his
Majesty's ship Boreas.

Enclosure No. 5

Captain Thompson to Laforey

[Copy. Signed.]

Boreas : English Harbour. 4th August, 1780.

Sir,—In answer to your letter of this date enclosing an order to put myself under your command, I beg leave to inform you, that I cannot receive your order.

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

C. THOMPSON.

Commissioner Laforey.

Enclosure No. 6

Laforey to Captain Thompson

[Copy. Signed.]

English Harbour. 4th August, 1780.

Sir,—Having wrote to you this morning a letter upon the public service in the character of commander-in-chief, &c. &c. &c., and enclosed therein

an order to you to put yourself under my command, with a preamble thereto expressive of the title given me in my commission by the right honourable the lords commissioners of the admiralty, which commission you are not otherwise unacquainted with, I having, upon a circumstance similar to that which occasions our present correspondence, shewn it to you; and you having in the reply you made to my letter and order addressed me in the civil capacity of commissioner of the navy, I cannot but look upon it as a want of due attention, at least, to the character I am vested with here, which you must know your refusal of obedience to cannot deprive me of; and deem it incumbent on me therefore to call upon you for an explanation upon that head.

I am, Sir, your very humble servant,
JOHN LAFOREY.

Enclosure No. 7

Captain Thompson to Laforey

[*Copy. Signed.*]

Boreas: English Harbour. 4th August, 1780.

Sir,—Was I to acknowledge you commander-in-chief at Antigua, I could have no pretence to decline receiving your orders. That being the point we differ upon, you cannot expect me to address you as such, nor in any other character than commissioner, which is the only official capacity I can consider you in. I must request our correspondence on this subject may end here.

I am, Sir,
Your very humble servant,
C. THOMPSON.

John Laforey, Esq.,
Commissioner, English Harbour.

Enclosure No. 8

Laforey to Sir George Rodney

[*Copy. Signed.*]

English Harbour. 4th August, 1780.

Sir,—His Majesty's ship *Boreas* arriving this morning here, Captain Charles Thompson, her commander, paid me a visit and declared he would not submit to receive orders from me as commander-in-chief at this port; in consequence of which I wrote him a letter enclosing orders to him to put himself under my command, and received from him an answer—copies of all which I now transmit to you. I must, upon this occasion, Sir, have recourse to your power for support in the department the lords commissioners of the admiralty have been pleased to place me [in]; for unless you have the means of enforcing their commission, the purposes for which I have been established in my command here must be entirely frustrated, and Captain Thompson's example will be followed by every commander, down to the smallest vessel of war, who shall occasionally call in at this port, the consequence resulting from which I need not point out to you.

I must observe that this is not a hasty and inconsiderate act of Captain Thompson, but done upon deliberation; for upon his coming to this port, some months past, he expressed his intention to refuse subordination to my command, declaring his doubts whether the lords of the admiralty had power to give me such a commission; but upon further conversation, and upon my condescending to shew it to him, he submitted to it at that time.

I enclose also copies of two letters which passed

between Captain Thompson and myself upon the subject of his address to me in his first letter.

I am with great regard, Sir,
your most obedient and very
humble servant,

JOHN LAFOREY.

Sir George B. Rodney, Bart.,
Admiral of the White and
Commander-in-Chief, &c. &c. &c.

Laforey to Middleton

Antigua. 13th August, 1780.

Since I wrote my last letter to you, I have received the admiral's answer to my letter, with a commission to hoist a broad pennant, which I have desired leave to decline accepting of, for reasons you will see in my answer to his letter, which I also enclose. However necessary I think such an appointment would be to the carrying on the service here, where, for the want of a ship to do my duty from, I have been often in the most awkward situations imaginable—not having even a white man to carry my orders or messages, and obliged to write everything of the most trifling nature to send by negroes—yet it was impossible for me to accept his offer, grounded upon the inefficacy of the commission granted me by the admiralty, to whom I must refer this matter and await their decision upon it. By the same conveyance you will receive this, my letter to the admiralty will go, and I shall be obliged to you to inform me, as soon as you are acquainted with it, what turn this affair is likely to take.

With best respects and compliments to all you love, I am, my dear friend, . . .

I have attested the copies of the letters, &c., which I enclose, that in case they should reach your hands before those I send to the admiralty, you may, if you please, shew them where cognizance will be taken of them.

Since I wrote the above, the Montagu arrived with the Robinson storeship, which she towed up from St. Kitts. By her I have the letter of which I now send you a copy to shew you the inconsistency of the writer, who, but the day before, offered me his commission under such restrictions as must have precluded me from doing that very service he the next day proposed. I do not want a feather, nor am I foolish enough to desire to involve myself, unrequired, in a state of trouble and responsibility beyond what was expected of me in my appointment, and from which I could derive no advantage; whenever I have gone out of that line, it has been only in obedience to the commands of those to whom I considered myself subordinate; which, had I refused, must have laid the admiral under the necessity of establishing a commanding officer here for those purposes.

Enclosure No. 1

Sir George Rodney to Laforey

[Copy. Signed.]

Sandwich: St. Christopher's. 7th August, 1780.

Sir,—I received your letter containing a correspondence between you and Captain Thompson, which I was sorry to see, on account of the bad tendency a dispute of that kind may be of to his Majesty's service; to put an end to which, I have sent you the enclosed powers, which however I mean to be strictly confined to the port of English Harbour, that the captains and commanders of his

Majesty's ships and vessels inferior to you may not dispute such orders and directions as you may think necessary to issue for the refitment of his Majesty's ships there—in which sense only, I apprehend, their lordships could mean the preamble of your appointment should be understood; otherways it must militate against the authority they have vested in me and every commander-in-chief on this station, as there cannot be two commanders-in-chief at one and the same time.

In that sense, without forming any claim to prize money, or any authority other than at the place and for the purpose above mentioned, if you choose to accept it, I shall be ready to support your authority; otherways, to prevent detriment to his Majesty's service, I must recall this commission and appoint some officer senior to yourself to command in English Harbour.

I am with great regard, Sir,
your most obedient and most
humble servant,
G. B. RODNEY.

Enclosure No. 2

[*Copy. Signed.*]

By Sir George Brydges Rodney, Bart.,
Admiral of the White, Rear-Admiral of
Great Britain and Commander-in-Chief of
his Majesty's ships and vessels employed
and to be employed at Barbados, the Leeward Islands, and on the seas adjacent.

To John Laforey, Esq., hereby appointed commanding officer of his Majesty's ships fitting and refitting in English Harbour, Antigua.

Whereas my lords commissioners of the admiralty have thought proper to grant you a commis-

sion to act as commander-in-chief of his Majesty's ships employed on this station, in the absence of the commander-in-chief or any other your superior officer who may have left this station: And whereas several of the captains have been induced to think they should act right if they disputed your orders, as you had no military commission, I have therefore thought it necessary for his Majesty's service, and to prevent for the future all altercation whatever, or disobedience of orders, to empower you, and I do hereby empower you, by virtue of the authority in me vested, to hoist and wear a distinguishing pennant in English Harbour, in the absence of any senior officer; which pennant you are to hoist on board his Majesty's sloop *Star*, which sloop I have ordered to be stationed in the said harbour till I may think it necessary to appoint another vessel in lieu of her for that station.

And whereas I think it highly necessary to prevent all delays in the refitting his Majesty's ships which I think proper to send to English Harbour for that purpose, and in order to keep the officers to their duty (which has been too much neglected), [I] do appoint you, by this commission, to act as commanding officer of his Majesty's ships fitting and refitting in that harbour; willing and requiring you forthwith to hoist the distinguishing pennant on board his Majesty's sloop the *Star*, in the absence of a senior officer, and take upon you the charge and command of commanding officer accordingly; hereby charging all captains, commanders, officers and companies belonging to his Majesty's ships and vessels which may put into English Harbour, to be obedient to you as commanding officer in that port; And you, likewise, to observe and follow such orders and directions as you shall from time to time receive from me or any other your superior officer for his

Majesty's service; for which this shall be your warrant.

Given under my hand and seal on board his Majesty's ship Sandwich, Basse Terre Road, St. Christopher's, this sixth day of August, 1780. In the Twentieth year of his Majesty's reign, &c.

G. B. RODNEY.

By command of the Admiral,
Will. Paget.

Enclosure No. 3

Sir George Rodney to Commissioner Laforey

Sandwich: St. Christopher's. 9th August, 1780.

In case it should be impossible to tow the Robinson up to Antigua, as she has a great quantity of small stores and spars on board, I leave it to you—whether it would not be proper to send such a vessel, as you think can beat up to windward under convoy, to receive such stores—leaving the Robinson to proceed to England with the first convoy. Captain Houlton of his Majesty's ship the Montagu (who brings this letter) will inform you if he has been obliged to throw off his towing of that store ship.

Enclosure No. 4

Laforey to Sir George Rodney

[Copy. Signed.] English Harbour. 12th August, 1780.

Sir,—I have received by his Majesty's ship Greyhound your favour of the 7th instant, and I have also to acknowledge the receipt of a commission from you dated the sixth day of August, 1780, appointing me commanding officer of his Majesty's

ships fitting and refitting at English Harbour, Antigua, and directing me to hoist a distinguishing pennant on board one of the ships in the port, with a commission to hold courts martial while my broad pennant shall be flying.

I am very sensible, Sir, from the numerous inconveniences I have experienced, of the necessity that the commanding officer at this port should have a ship appointed for him in order that he may have the assistance of the captain, officers, and boats to carry into execution the business of the port, and I had in contemplation the making a representation of the same; but as your commission is grounded upon the refusal of one captain to obey that given me by the lords commissioners of the admiralty, and the denial of their power to grant it in several of the others; and as you are pleased, in your letter of the above mentioned date, to make my acceptance of the same optional, I must beg leave to decline the honour you intended me, not thinking myself at liberty to take any step, or enter into any measure that may tend to call in question, or do away, on my part, the right of the lords commissioners of the admiralty, who vested me with the powers I have hitherto exercised here.

I shall use my utmost exertions in carrying on his Majesty's service with those officers who will be subordinate to my command, until you have made such arrangements for its being effectually done, as you judge most proper.

Permit me, Sir, to represent to you that the intent and purport of the commission and instructions given me by the admiralty, are quite misunderstood in the recital thereof in your commission, as well as in your letter of the 7th instant; for which I beg leave to refer to the copies of both I had the honour to send you upon your arrival on this station.

Those limits have never been exceeded by me, but when your orders and directions occasioned it.

I must also beg leave to suggest to you, Sir, that if I had not been withheld, by the above mentioned reasons, from accepting the offer you are pleased to make me, your commission limiting the powers of the commanding officer to the port of English Harbour only would not have been sufficiently ample to answer the end you propose therefrom. All the ports in this island into which a vessel of war can enter must have connexion with this place, particularly St. John's, where ships often stop to refit and get their stores round from hence, and where cartel ships, transports, storeships and victuallers lay, the control and superintendency of which have been hitherto put by you under the direction of the commanding officer here.

I have the honour to be, with great respect, Sir, your most obedient and very humble servant,

JOHN LAFOREY.

Sir George Brydges Rodney, Bart., Admiral
of the White and Commander-in-Chief,
&c. &c. &c.

Laforey to Middleton

Sandwich : St. John's. 23 August, 1780.

[*Duplicate. Signed.*]

You will probably receive this with several letters from me chiefly upon the subject of the disputes which have happened about the efficacy of my command at English Harbour. The fleet having come to this port, upon my talking over the matter with Sir George Rodney, he has desired that the commission with all the conditions he annexed to it, which he before offered me, may be quite obliterated ; and he has now given me an order, a

copy of which I enclose to you, grounded upon the necessity of such a measure to facilitate the means of carrying on the service. As the reasons for which it was first proposed to me are quite left out, and a different motive substituted in their room, I have thought it right to acquiesce therein ; as, independent of the cause which first gave rise to this affair, it will be impracticable for me to carry on the service put upon me here by the commander-in-chief without such assistance as the order enables me to avail myself of ; for though I totally give up my time and attention thereto, yet no constitution can for any time stand through what I have lately undergone. We have for some time not had less than from 10 to 12 ships in the port, besides the occasional arrival of others which often cross in upon the arrangements I make, and never leave me a moment's respite. I hope, from the above considerations, I shall be justified to the admiralty for my acquiescence in the measure until their lordships have determined upon this matter, and I will beg the favour of you to communicate to Lord Sandwich for me, as much as I have transmitted to you of this affair as is necessary for his lordship's information, whose approval of my conduct is of the first consideration with me.

Enclosure

By Sir Geo. Brydges Rodney, Bt., Admiral of the White and Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty's ships & vessels employed and to be employed at Barbados and the Leeward Islands, and in the Seas adjacent.

[*Copy.*]

Whereas inconveniences have accrued and his Majesty's service been retarded by your not having a ship to hoist a distinguishing pennant in—

You are hereby required and directed to hoist a distinguishing broad pennant on board any of his Majesty's ships that may be in English Harbour, the better to enable you to carry on the public service. For which this shall be your order.

Given under my hand on board his Majesty's ship Sandwich, St. John's Road, Antigua, 22 August 1780.

G. B. RODNEY.

To John Laforey, Esq., &c. &c. &c.
By command of the Admiral,
Will. Paget.

Laforey to Middleton

Antigua. 26th September, 1780.

A letter dated the 16th of August with some papers, copies of what I had wrote to the admiralty and of the correspondence which had passed between Sir George Rodney, Captain Thompson and myself, upon the subject of my command here, which were sent up to Barbados in order to go by a frigate which was intended to have been dispatched home, is since returned to me, as also my letter to the admiralty upon the same business; so that they all go to England by this packet. I also enclose a duplicate of my last letter which was written on board the Sandwich and left there to get its passage home when an occasion offered.

I have now to thank you for your two favours of the 10th of May and 22nd of July, which came by the Ramillies, and it is with much concern I have to regret the almost total destruction of her convoy.¹

¹ Captured by the French off Cape St. Vincent on 9th August 1780. See *D.N.B.*, s.n. Moutray, John.

It is fortunate, however, that the great assortment of naval stores preparing for us was not in that fleet.

Sir George having left us¹ for the hurricane months, I have communicated to Commodore Hotham (at St. Lucia) the board's intention of establishing a storehouse and storekeeper at Barbados, and have requested a frigate to carry Munton there, whom I shall send to hire the storehouse, establish the storekeeper, to take his security, and put him in the way to do his business according to the modes of his yard. We will not fail to send you by every opportunity an account of our remains of stores here, and what we most immediately want; and you may rest assured that nothing shall be issued to the ships but what is absolutely necessary.

Many thanks to you for your advice respecting the part of the storehouse I have taken for an office; although you do not explain the motives, I am well convinced they are most friendly. You advise my confining it to one end for that purpose only. The whole upper floor of the storehouse is not equal to the smallest office for the commissioner in any one of the yards at home; exclusive of closets, there are but three rooms; one is filled with desks for the clerks, another I do my business in, and the third is a retiring room, where I have a field bed to occupy when my business keeps me too late to reach home,—which often happens. Surely, my dear friend, neither the admiralty nor navy board require their commissioner to do his duty under a shed in the yard? The constant application I find necessary requires, in this hot country, more space than at home; and to sit still all day stuffed up

¹ He had gone to New York. Cf. *ante*, i. 72 sq.

with clerks and papers in the same room would destroy me soon. It often happens that I am detained by business till very late at night; my house (by a short cut I have made) is about two miles from the head of the harbour, which is nearer the yard than any other could be procured; but if it was not half a mile from it, the officers of the yard could not, in the heat of this sun, have recourse to me so often in the day as they find necessary, nor my occasions would require of them. Nor could my daily presence in the yard be dispensed with; for I have often been obliged to call in the aid of my power as commanding officer, to contain within bounds some of the flippant gentlemen on this station, who seem to have no idea of any control but where they are themselves to exercise it; and should a commanding officer come here who may not be disposed to support me, I shall find it extremely difficult to carry on the duty of my civil department. Whether it is that the manners and customs of our service are altered within these twenty years, or that it may proceed from the suddenness with which some of these gentlemen here have started prematurely into commands, I cannot say; but certain it is that I can distinguish a great alteration in the discipline of the service between those periods. After all I have said however, my dear friend, if you (for reasons possibly proper only for your own knowledge) are of opinion that I should relinquish part or all of the apartments I have appropriated to the purposes of my office, I will readily acquiesce therein and make the best shift I can otherwise.

I conclude as soon as the home campaign is over we shall have coppered ships dropping out very fast; till then I do not expect to see many. If the combined powers have made a junction of

their fleets, our whole force will be occupied until they retire to port.

The Fame, Vigilant and Suffolk have been sent me almost sinking. The cause of it in the two former the same (and I conclude the same also in the other); scarce any oakum in the seams and butts, particularly in and near the garboard-streak. I have often thought that the pressure of the upper works upon the bottom, when a ship is upon the blocks in the dock, closes her seams so much that when she comes to be equally borne in the water, the paying of her seams cracks, and the water, penetrating, rots the caulking.

I hope our repeated success in North America will far overbalance the check we have sustained in the loss of our convoy, and that if we hold our own there for the remainder of the season it may dispose the Americans to sue for peace this winter. I have no doubt of our ability to cope with France and Spain afterwards. You will doubtless know where Rodney is gone. I hope he will have the same good luck that has hitherto accompanied him; nothing, I find, is so essential to the constituting of a great officer.

I am much hurt in my mind at the account I have received by this packet from Mrs. Laforey of the state of my poor little girl's health; I will hope something from the change of air and climate by-and-by, for my family (the boy excepted) must come out to me as soon as ever the times become tranquil. I cannot leave this country till my affairs are arranged, nor support the expense of two families while they are in their present state. I have large possessions here, but they are, like all the rest in this island, under incumbrances which the long series of dry weather has chiefly caused, and can only be relieved by the contrary extreme.

Mrs. Laforey desires me to determine about the disposal of my son.¹ She inclines much to a mode of education you have been so kind as to recommend, but has difficulty about the expense of it. It is true that at this juncture we can ill afford articles of expense which may be dispensed with, but no pecuniary considerations can be brought into competition with the establishing in a boy the principles of honour and virtue while he is qualifying to make a proper progress through life. Will you have the goodness, my dear sir, to add most considerably to the friendship you have already conferred upon us by assisting Mrs. Laforey to place him wherever you best approve? She will be quite helpless in the disposal of a boy, and will be as thankful to you as myself for your kindness in this matter.

I must apologise to your patience for this long epistle. My most affectionate respects wait on Mrs. and Miss Middleton, and I am, with true regard. . . .

Antigua. 2nd November, 1780.

I wrote you on the 26th of last month² by the Thynne packet which went directly from hence to England; this letter is intended to go by the convoy if an express does not carry it before they sail. I say an express, because I have recommended it to Mr. Hotham, who, I conclude, upon the extraordinary occasion for it, will not trust his despatches to the slow progress of a fleet of ships.

A most terrible hurricane which happened on the 10th and 11th of last month, which, contrary to its usual track, expended its violence upon the southern islands—its effects having been fatal even

¹ Francis, born in 1767; captain of the *Spartiate* at Trafalgar; died, admiral, in 1835.

² *Sc.* September.

to Barbados and Grenada, sweeping all that chain of islands quite to Dominica—has made horrid devastation among the shipping at all those places, driving everything either ashore or to sea. It is said there is scarce a building to be seen on any of those islands; all the lower part of St. Pierre's, at Martinique, next to the sea is washed away; a convoy of sixty sail, under the escort of two 40-gun frigates, with 2000 troops on board, which arrived only the day before, all driven to sea, 100 of their troops only having been landed. The *Juno*, a French 40-gun frigate, is wrecked in Kingston Bay at St. Vincent, and all her crew perished. The *Experiment* driven on shore at Guadeloupe, but it is said will be got off. The same account reports that two frigates were wrecked off Trinity in Martinique, which, from pieces of the wreck that have driven on shore, are said to be English.

But now comes what we know of our own losses. Mr. Hotham has wrote me on the 17th ult. that the *Vengeance* was driven on the rocks at the Carenage, and obliged to cut away her masts, but is got off; that of the *Egmont*, *Ajax*, *Montagu* and *Amazon*, blown from the mouth of the Carenage, and the *Deal Castle* and *Cameleon* from Gros Islet Bay, the *Montagu*, without masts and eight feet water in her hold, was only returned; that the *Beaver's* prize was lost upon the windward part of St. Lucia, her captain ¹ and all her officers perished, and only fourteen of her men saved. The *Ajax*, however, has been spoke to, returning to St. Lucia with the loss of her mizenmast; the *Amazon* is arrived here with the loss of all her masts, bowsprit, and seventeen of her guns; the *Albemarle* (blown out of Barbados) with the loss of her mainmast; and the

¹ Commander John Auriol Drummond.

Venus with that of her foremast and bowsprit ; so that there still remains to be accounted for : the Egmont, Cameleon¹ and Deal Castle ; the Brune, cruising somewhere to the southward ; the Endymion, Andromeda,² and Laurel cruising to windward of Martinique ; and the Blanche,³ which sailed the day the gale came on with despatches for me, and must, I think, be lost ; her consort, the Alcmène, arrived, whose captain reported he saw her constantly pumping till he lost sight of her. The Convert, Surprise, and Drake have been seen unhurt since the gale, which comprehends all our force in these seas at present. What we shall do for masts, sails, and stores to repair all these damages we know of, and those we have yet to learn, I know not ; if storeships are on the road to us it will be happy. I omitted in the account of our squadron the Rover, which is taken by a French frigate.

How thankful we should be to providence that our fleet, under Sir George Rodney, were out of these seas ; they would have been destroyed at the very place which was considered as their only shelter. The accounts from Barbados are terrible. I shall, I fear, have much more to tell you before my letter goes away, as every day now will bring us the particulars of this almost general calamity, wherein I am happy enough to be able to except the northernmost islands—we in this island having shared only the rain, of which we only stood in need, being at last almost deluged, and in a fair way to make a crop, which it has not done these four years. Just as I had got thus far I received another letter from Mr. Hotham, pressing me for stores to refit

¹ Lost. Commander James Johnstone.

² Lost. Captain Henry Bryne.

³ Lost. Captain Samuel Uppleby.

his ships ; it is dated the 23rd ; no account of any of his ships but the Ajax.

10th November.

The devastation which the hurricane made amongst our shipping, with the time necessary for the ships driven out of the roads to collect again, and a new arrangement in consequence thereof for the convoy, has occasioned their sailing being retarded until this time, when it has been fixed that the *Fame*, *Albemarle*, and the *Britannia* and *Robinson* storeships, armed, and commanded by lieutenants, shall conduct them home. The same conveyance that brought me these orders from Commodore Hotham carries this letter—the *Brune* going with his despatches to England. You will have in his letters to the admiralty an account of the ships lost and missing, which latter term is, I am sorry to say, synonymous with the former. I think it impossible that the *Egmont*, *Endymion*, *Blanche*, *Deal Castle* and *Cameleon* can be anywhere but at the bottom of the sea ; the wind for three weeks after the gale, almost continually in the south-west quarter, would not permit their going to Jamaica.

I will not trouble you with what I have already said to your board ; I am sure of every exertion there to reinstate us as soon as it is practicable, but give me leave, my dear friend, from motives of humanity, to repeat a request I made you in my letter of the 21st August, requesting you would use your influence to get an hospital ship sent out to this port. The numbers of men who lose their lives here is shocking to be a spectator of, and this through the want of barely necessary accommodations. Sir George Rodney, for reasons known, I believe, only to himself (or rather, I think, without

any reason at all), has set his face against the erection of an hospital here, although the sick-and-hurt [board] had prepared the frame of one, and only waited his ordering a contract to be advertised for in this island for putting it up ; and yet he loads us with all the sick of his fleet, which he sends here by all opportunities. The want of common accommodations and proper assistance counteracts the skill and attention of a very able and humane surgeon who presides over the hovels called an hospital, which are so far extended round this place that it is a journey every day to make a round of visits to them ; the consequence of which is that there is no check to drunkenness, and straying from one to the other in the heats of the day and dews of the night. It is neither proper nor decent for me to make a representation publicly of this evil, much as my feelings are hurt by it, which is in the department of the officer to whom I am only a substitute ; but I cannot omit using my endeavours in a private way to avert it as far as is in my power.

It will possibly be much speculated upon how it has happened that so many of our ships have foundered in the late gale of wind, two only, the *Laurel* and *Beaver's* prize, having been known to have gone on shore ; but lest it should be attributed to the coppered bottoms on those missing, I think it right to inform you that the *Andromeda* filled by shipping of a sea and having her after hatchways open ; and that Captain Finch attributes the preservation of the *Amazon* to the tightness of her bottom and all her hatchways being secured ; the ship laying down so low that the water washed the trail of the weather gun-carriages, and the officers and men stood upon the broadside until they got her righted by her masts going away.

And before I finish this subject give me leave to observe to you the necessity there will be for allowing the coppered ships to move their ballast as often as opportunities will admit. Most of the people belonging to the Amazon and Hornet sloop, who have lately been employed here in breaking up their holds and shaking up their ballast, have been seized with putrid fevers from its exceeding stench. The Amazon, indeed, had great quantities of provisions mixed among it by many of the casks being staved in her hold; but that was not the case with the other. I apprehend it proceeds from the tightness of the ships, and especially if they are not careful to let water constantly into them. I am, however, of opinion that they should move their ballast as often, at least, as they would have done if they had been docked.

My best and most affectionate respects attend all your good family. . . .

Antigua. 20th December, 1780.

I wrote to you last by the Brune frigate on the 10th November, wherein I advised you of my letter dated the 26th September by the Thynne packet; since the arrival of which nothing has come to us here from England, and I much fear the succeeding packet shared the melancholy fate of too many of our ships in the late hurricane. One has arrived at Barbados some time past, but so long a space has elapsed that we concluded her taken until, a day past, we had intelligence of her having got into St. Kitts and that she was to be hourly expected here. The cause of her falling to leeward I do not know, but I have instantly set to work with my pen, as out of the forty-eight hours she is directed to stay at each island it is full half that time before we are put into possession of our letters.

I have wrote to the board a long letter upon various matters which I will not trouble you with the repetition of here, but I will observe to you upon one article, what I did not choose to trust to any clerk to transcribe—that it will be impolitic and unsafe to suffer the man I have represented to them as disgusted, to quit the employment he now fills while in this country. He has no attachment to us but what his interest leads him to, and may be very prejudicial to us from his local knowledge here should he seek other masters. If they do not approve his continuing in his present station, I hope they will provide for him at home.

On the 2nd of this month I had a letter from our commander-in-chief dated at sea, by his son in the *Boreas*, who came in for what we had not—a mast. He must then have been within two or three days' sail of Barbados. I have not heard of or from him since. He informed me that his squadron were separated from him in a hard gale of wind two days after he left the coast of America, and desired I would have masts and yards ready for such as he had just reason to believe would want them. After all that I have before represented upon our situation here, I need only say the storeships cannot arrive too soon.

In two former letters I have solicited your private influence in getting an hospital ship sent out to this place. Forgive me that I repeat it now, lest those letters in their precarious passages should not have reached you. I am not yet, thank God, sufficiently divested of humanity to see with indifference numbers of men lost for want of common accommodation, and the skill and attention of a most able surgeon frustrated through want of even covering from the inclemency of the weather to his patients. What can induce Sir George Rodney to set his face

against the erecting an hospital here, which is already framed and prepared at home by the sick-and-hurt board, and only waits his order to contract here for the raising of, can only be accounted for by his unaccountable partiality to St. Lucia, which, if he ever reflects, the effects of the hurricane in the port, and of its climate among the troops and ships must entirely destroy his predilection for. But what is very extraordinary, at the time he is declaring this place improper for the reception of the sick of his fleet, he has been constantly sending them all here.

I cannot quit this subject until I have recommended to your notice and protection, if ever he comes within your department, Mr. James Young, the surgeon of our nominal hospital, or more properly, of our sick tents. I promised you when I met a man of merit in our profession you should always know it. I ground my report of him upon his great ability, his indefatigable attention to his business at home, and a disinterestedness in his practice abroad which shows a liberality that is rarely to be found. Upon the decease of the Hon. Captain Pitt, to whose assistance he was called with another physician, I sent him five Johannes, which he positively refused to receive, declaring he thought it his duty to attend every officer in the service, whether sent with ticket to him or not; and could not be prevailed upon to receive any gratification. Upon enquiry I find he has made this an invariable rule; and yet has this Man of Ross but two hundred pounds a year, and no perquisites whatever that I can find; although the salary has, I am told, been fifty more in time of war, which has not been increased in his favour. I talked to him once on this subject, to which he replied with a degree of modesty and moderation that raised him high in my esteem.

If it falls in your way to serve this man I am sure you will. You will probably conclude I must have much leisure who can dwell so long upon the subject of an individual, but I have an uncommon impulse in this relation.

25th December.

I had wrote so far and left my letter open that I might add whatever more might occur before the packet arrived, of which we were in hourly expectation, when some gentlemen arrived from St. Kitts and informed us that she had sailed for England from thence. What she has done with the mails for this island and Montserrat, at neither of which she has been allowed to call, we yet remain to be made acquainted with. This is the manoeuvre of our commander-in-chief, whose motives thereto I cannot guess at ; but although it heartily vexes me, does by no means affect me with surprise. It must, however, serve to account for any supposed neglect of correspondence in me for the future, seeing that we may be always liable to the same caprice. I have sent my public letters to him to be forwarded from his fleet, but I enclose this to the particular care of Young,¹ who I conclude will acquaint you with more of the news of this country than I am master of.

It is now three months since I heard of or from my family, and if there were any letters in this packet possibly they may now be in their way back to them again. I beg leave to trouble you with the enclosed, and with my most affectionate regards to all you hold near and dear, I am with the most sincere regard

¹ Captain of the Sandwich.

26 December.

I had just closed this letter in order to send it by the Suffolk, which is ready to join the fleet, when your favour of the 19th October, which from its contents I conclude came by the Alfred, was brought me from St. Kitts, but which Bayne might surely have sent me from St. Lucia some time past. It contains two subjects most welcome to me: the first, an account of my family, from whom it is now three months since I heard (so long it is since any packet has touched here), and I was particularly anxious about my poor little girl; the other, your very kind proposal of my removing to a seat at your board when a vacancy happens. This I have ever had in hope since the conversations you held with me in London upon these matters, and as I know you will reprimand me for too much profession (as you will term it) I will only offer my sincerest thanks for that unbated friendship which disposes you so unremittingly to watch occasions of promoting my welfare. I enclose a copy of the letter I write to Lord Sandwich for this purpose, and I will enclose a duplicate of it in my next letter to you, lest this should miscarry, which you may or not make use of for me as you see expedient. I am glad you have pitched upon our friend Wallis for one of us; both he and Harry Martin will be great acquisitions; they are gentlemen and men of sense.

Adieu once more.

29th December.

Last night the Antigua mail was brought from St. Lucia, by which I got your favour of the 5th and 28th of September and 12th of October. The Suffolk, which is going to join the fleet at St. Lucia, is now getting under sail; and as I understand the

Hornet sloop is going express home from thence, I have only time to thank you for them, and to congratulate you most heartily on Miss Middleton's¹ change of condition, upon which occasion I beg you will present her my most sincere felicitations with my heartiest wishes for every comfort and happiness that can attend her in her new state.

Thank you kindly for your remembrance of my carpenter ; I hope he is now better provided for. If you send us another here, I wish he came from one of the shipwright's departments of our yards ; for the officers here are always disputing upon their rights for power in their particular spheres ; not one of them know what their own departments should be, and I do not know how to determine between them.

I will answer more amply to the subjects of your last favours soon, but am pressed at present to get my letters away that they may profit by the conveyance of this express. The admiral has wrote me a violent complaint against John Tucker of Barbados, accusing him of being a most dangerous and disloyal man, and grossly imposing upon government in the purchasing of stores and contracting for vessels ; and desires I will remove him from his appointment and put another in his place. As nothing of this kind has yet appeared in his accounts, and I well know the violent manner of our admiral's taking up things upon report, I shall send up Mr. Marston to procure a storehouse there, and if upon strict enquiry the accusation should prove true, shall direct him to appoint another ; or, if otherwise, to satisfy Sir G. Rodney upon that head when he gets to St. Lucia, to which place he must go to procure some person to issue stores from the

¹ Middleton's only child, Diana, married, 20th December, 1780, Gerard Noel Edwards, afterwards Sir Gerard Noel-Noel, nephew (on the mother's side) of the sixth Earl of Gainsborough.

storeships when they arrive, for we cannot induce any of his clerks to go, so much are they deterred by the unhealthiness of the place, which has killed a former one and brought the two last sent there to such a state that they have never recovered it. Adieu once more. My most affectionate remembrances wait on all you love in and belonging to Hertford Street.

Antigua. 6th February, 1781.

I wrote to you by the *Alcmène* upon the 30th of last month, wherein I mentioned one of the 15th I had wrote you by the *Comet* packet. My last acknowledged the receipt of your two favours of the 13th and 17th of November. The *Alcmène* sailed to join the fleet yesterday, and when she will sail for England—such is the uncertainty of every movement here—it will be impossible to guess; but as the *Cumberland* packet is just arrived, and goes straight to England, she will probably get there before the *Alcmène*, so I will repeat herein all I said in my former letter, excepting such matters as will keep cold.

By your favours of the 13th and 17th November, I found that Lord Sandwich was informed of Captain Thompson's conduct towards the commission the admiralty has invested me with. I observed upon the communication you had made to me thereof, that I was sure I need not to you dwell upon the nature of that commission. That how far it was in effect military, or in what degree it subjected me to the command and control of the commander-in-chief, the 5th article of my instructions, delivered me with my commission, which directs me to acquaint the commander-in-chief here as well as the secretary of the admiralty with my proceedings from time to time, I thought clearly

pointed out to me a subordination to him ; so that after reciting the arguments used by the captains who dispute the validity of my commission I will confine myself to local observations.

They contend that the articles of war are confined to all in or belonging to his Majesty's ships or fleet ; that not being under such description, I am not amenable to military law, and consequently they are not subject thereto for refusing obedience to my orders. The inefficacy of confining my command to English Harbour, even for the purposes of only fitting out the ships that come to Antigua, I have pointed out to Sir G. B. Rodney in the letter I wrote him declining the offer of his commission to wear a broad pennant ; and I enclosed to you the copy of a letter from him but a few days after he sent me that commission with the restrictive conditions annexed to it, wherein he found it necessary to leave to my discretion the ordering a man-of-war from the port, from which I was to be prohibited by his former letter ; I mention this circumstance in proof of what I have further to say upon this subject.

The command of ships in all ports of this island, even for the purpose of refitting them only, is indispensably necessary ; otherwise it will be only in English Harbour that their captains will be under any command at all, and may continue as long in port as they please without being subject to any control whatever. A commanding officer must be stationed at St. John's or English Harbour while the fleet is employed watching the enemy, with whom the commander-in-chief may be in a regular course of correspondence. It cannot be done with transient commanders ; much must be left to his discretion, and a latitude for emergent occasions. There are many instances wherein I have had

occasion to exercise that power, all which have had the commander-in-chief's entire approbation, which evinces the necessity for, and the propriety of, the measure. The protection of the navigation of the islands to leeward, and a check to the trade between the French islands and station, and their commerce with America can neither from situation or circumstances be attended to while the admiral has the motions of the enemy's fleet to follow.

The business of this port since these seas have been the seat of war has been equal to that of the whole command at other periods. I do not by any means point out myself for such an employ; it will take off from my hands much anxiety and responsibility whenever a commanding officer is placed here to perform those services; but if they should be expected from me, I must be furnished with the means of carrying them into effect. I conclude long before this gets to your hands the affair will be arranged; I will however request of you to communicate to Lord S[andwic]h as much of this representation as you judge necessary towards enabling me to act up to his lordship's expectations in whatever department he judges proper I should serve.

I observed in my former that Gambier was not arrived here, nor have I heard he is to come from America; that I will show every attention in my power to young Mr. Hunt. I thanked you most sincerely therein, and repeat it now, for your intended kindness to my boy, on whose score I shall be perfectly easy while he is under your protection. That in my letter of the 26th of December last I mentioned that Sir George Rodney had complained to me of the conduct of Mr. John Tucker of Barbados, acting as agent for the business of this yard in that island. I have since understood

that, not choosing to wait the issue of the reference he made to me, he had also at the same time wrote to the navy board against him ; that in consequence thereof I had laid that matter before the board in my last by the Alcène. Mr. Innis, the builder, has received a warrant appointing him builder at Jamaica. He says he has wrote to you, requesting that he may continue here. Possibly that may occasion another appointment ; at any rate I cannot let him go from hence until another builder arrives ; we have nobody equal to his department now in the yard, and the service will not admit of his absence till he is relieved. Nothing of consequence enough to insert has happened since my last ; great hurry, great demands for what we have not still continues.

Best and most affectionate remembrances await on all you hold dear.

Antigua. 12th February, 1781.

I have just received (by the Scourge) the admiralty's answer to the letters and papers I transmitted to them upon the subject of Captain Thompson, and my correspondence with Sir G. B. R. in consequence thereof. I know not what to make of their reply. If I was in the least conscious I had acted with impropriety, I should construe it into an admonition if not a reprimand. It is, however, the most ungracious letter I ever, in the whole course of my service, received from that board. You will doubtless know to what cause it is to be ascribed ; I must patiently wait the event. If you have not seen that letter you will find it by its date, at the office ; the 25th December.

I have through your kindness got a letter from Mrs. Laforey of the 22nd of December, under cover from the admiralty, who tells me of the narrow escape my poor boy has had from the consequence of the measles.

I say nothing of our operations in these seas, I hear it only by piece-meal; and you will have it perfectly, I conclude, by repeated expresses, by some one of which I hope you will get this which I send to the fleet to seek a passage.

With most affectionate respects to all your good family. . . .

Antigua. 16th February, 1781.

I have but just time by the return of the ship which brought me your favour of the 22nd December from Captain Young, to acknowledge the receipt of and thank you for it. I most sincerely congratulate you upon the union of your daughter with Mr. Edwards. The seeing a beloved child happily disposed of, is one of the greatest comforts I can conceive in private life. May every degree of happiness attend them; I beg you will make acceptable my best wishes upon the occasion. Mrs. Laforey contrived to get into the letter wrote me from the admiralty, which I mentioned to you in my last, a few lines for me, which came by those means to me immediately; a mode I have earnestly recommended to her for correspondence either through the admiralty or navy offices, to be put into the public packets; for the neglect and delay of private letters, both by packets and men-of-war, is most shameful.

I wrote to you on the 12th inst. [that I was] much hurt at a letter I had received from Mr. Stephens, by order of the board, in answer to the letters and papers I had transmitted upon the subject of the validity of their commission being called in question. I now find, by your favour, that Mr. Stephens' letter alluded to the new commission mentioned in your last (of which no notice is taken in his) and not to any past transactions on

my part, which would, in the latter case, certainly have implied some misconduct in me.

I have only time left to thank you for your continued kind attention to me, and with my best and most affectionate respects to your good family, to assure you . . .

Antigua. 26th April, 1781.

My Dear Friend,—My two letters by the packet of the 13th and 14th inst. acknowledged the receipt of your favour dated 5th January. I therein mentioned, in an obscure manner, the conduct of the commander-in-chief towards me, by endeavouring to thrust upon me every thing he chose to denominate 'naval stores,' and expecting that I should draw bills upon the government for their amount upon a valuation put upon them in this country. I expected the letter I wrote him in answer to his requisition would have put things upon a more proper footing, at least as to the species of stores we should take and their price, as well as the mode of receiving them; and from the answer I received to that letter from him, I concluded it would have been so; but he has lately made a fresh attack upon me, in high language, to receive a vessel he has loaded here; and, in order to justify his proceedings, has lowered his price, which, I have good authority to say, he never meant in the first instance. As this matter still hangs, and may go no further, I have not taken any public notice of it to the board; but lest it should, and that no advantage may be taken of me by opportunities of making representations which I may not be able to avail myself of, I now enclose you copies of the letters which have hitherto passed between us upon this subject, which you will only use for your private information, except in the

contingency above mentioned, for which reason I will attest them.

To give you an idea only of the species and quantities of the naval stores—as they were denominated—sent up for me to unload in the yard, there were taken out of only four or five of the vessels, among other articles, 724 bolts of Dutch canvas, 702 casks of nails—great part of them spoiled with rust and very few of the sizes and sorts used for shipping, 246 casks of paints, 599 jugs of paint oil, 197 scrubbing brushes, 706 hanging locks, with other articles not in use or demand with us, besides a vast quantity of shingles and species of lumber for which we had no use. Judge then, from this sample, whether I did right in ordering six more vessels, laden in a similar manner, to be sent to the agent for prizes at St. John's. I have taken care, in the answer I have given to the second requisition, to guard myself against receiving every thing that it may be thought proper to send me, whether it may be fit for the public service or not. I am sorry to say that a view to private advantage appears to me to be at the bottom of all this matter, and they do not seem to care who it is they sacrifice if the point can be carried. Mr. Paget, the secretary, who was sent up, on my sending the vessels to the agent at St. John's, owned that Young and himself had planned a letter with proposals that the naval stores should be received by me, and an account thereof sent home in order for a valuation being set on them by the navy board; but that the admiral rejected it, saying he would have bills for the purchase of them, for that when it was referred to the commissioners, they would then give just what price they pleased for them. This was partly confirmed in a letter from Young to me, who added

that it was proposed a captain from a kind of committee they have formed for the business should come up to me to settle the terms upon which they should be received, but that the general objected to it. I think I see rather farther into this matter than is given out ; and it suggests to me that these stores, being seized as plunder on shore, and not captured at sea, they are apprehensive the government, if it is left to them to fix the terms of purchase, will take them as the king's property, for the public service. This it is not for me to contend for and set up a claim to, but it will rest with the government to pay the bills drawn for what is purchased, or not, as they shall judge proper. In short, my dear friend, it appears to me, in every instance that comes within my knowledge, that nothing but a spirit of avarice and rapacity pervades the chiefs of both departments in every transaction—at least where my participation has been thought necessary to effect their purposes.

The place had been but a few days taken when I received a private note from Sir G. R., desiring I would send him bills upon government for £15,500 sterling, payable to his banker, and that the money should be afterwards sent up to me. This, I thought right to excuse myself from doing ; and although the most civil private letters pass between us, I have it from good authority that I am much abused, and that at his public table a little time past, upon one of the company mentioning me, he said I should very soon be turned out of my place. However, this is so much of a piece with his licentious and slanderous talk of everybody, without distinction, both here and at home, that possibly I ought to think his approbation or even silence upon my subject the greatest slander. I am most heartily tired of this man, as you must, by this time, I

THE ST. EUSTATIUS PLUNDER 123

imagine, be of the subject. Pray present my most affectionate respects to Mrs. Middleton, Mrs. Edwards, Mrs. Bouverie and all your good family, and believe me,

Most faithfully and affectionately yours,

JNO. LAFOREY.

Enclosure 1

Rodney to Laforey

Sandwich : St. Eustatius.

26th March, 1781.

[*Office copy.*]

Sir,—I am this moment informed that several of the vessels sent from this place with naval stores for his Majesty's yard at English Harbour have been sent round to St. John's, which should seem so indirect¹ their not being wanted at the yard. From the very great demand for them for his Majesty's ships and the empty state of the store-houses at Antigua, I was led to give directions—though to the very great prejudice of the captors—that everything of that kind should be reserved for his Majesty's use, and sent to his Majesty's yard, where a reasonable valuation of them might be taken under your inspection; and from thence, under your direction, supplied to Barbados or St. Lucia, or where else they might be wanted in this country; a step which I conceived would be productive of a very great saving to government; as they would come much cheaper than from England, and, at the same time, effectually cut off the French and Americans from being supplied therewith, which they certainly would, effectually, though not directly, be, were they disposed of elsewhere in these parts. From the redundancy at your yard, too, I hoped they

¹ So in the copy. It is probably an error of transcription, and ought to read "seem to indicate."

might have been regularly supplied to that at Jamaica ; however you will be pleased to let me know what stores are further wanted at English Harbour, both as to quantity and quality, that they may be sent there before any other mode is adopted for their disposal. The only one left appears to be (which I shall adopt) to ship them for England, where I am sure they are wanted, and I am determined (if possible) that they shall not make their way to refit the ships of his Majesty's enemies in this part of the world.

Enclosure 2

Laforey to Rodney

[*Office copy. Abstract.*] Antigua Yard. 6th April, 1781.

[He sent the store ships to St. John's, as he had neither hands to unload and reload them—after taking out what he could use—nor room in the yard for the stores. The greater part of the stores were such as were not wanted for the service, or for which there was very little demand, and could be bought, from time to time, at St. John's ; others, again, were perished—as the nails, from rust—and useless. There were strong objections to his drawing bills on the navy board for large sums.]

Enclosure 3

Rodney to Laforey

[*Office copy.*] Sandwich : St. Eustatius. 21st April, 1781.

Sir,—The navy board having reported to me that they find the greatest difficulty in procuring naval stores in England sufficient for the use of the great number of ships employed in the public service, and recommending to me the utmost

economy in the expending of cordage and other stores, I am now to acquaint you, as one of the commissioners of the navy employed at Antigua, that, by the success of his Majesty's arms, a very considerable quantity of naval stores have been taken in this island, particularly cordage and canvas; and that a vessel of three hundred tons is now loaded and ready to be sent to English Harbour with the stores. I should be glad to have your answer whether those stores should be sent for the use of his Majesty's ships employed or to be employed in these seas during the war.

The captors I am sure have no view whatever but that his Majesty and the public may avail themselves of the advantage obtained by the capture of this island, and that the said stores may come to his Majesty's service at the most reasonable price, and such as government must have given in England, without the risk of freight or insurance.

My duty requires me to insist that the said naval stores shall not be sold to merchants, in order to prevent their being liable to be purchased by the public enemy, or to be the support of his Majesty's rebellious subjects in America. If you, Sir, are of opinion that the said stores should not be wanted for the use of his Majesty's ships employed in these seas, or that you are not empowered to desire their being sent to Antigua for the use of his Majesty, you will please to let me know, that I may order them to England where I am sure they will be acceptable, if it is only to send them back for the use of his Majesty's ships in the West Indies and America.

A proper account of the stores shall be sent with the ships, if you please, as one of his Majesty's commissioners of the navy, to receive them. The storekeeper acquainted me that he should make out

a proper assortment of stores for the use of the fleet at St. Lucia which are much wanted. You will please to acquaint me if he has so done, and if the stores are ready, that I may send a convoy with them.

Laforey to Middleton

Antigua. 28th November, 1781.

I wrote to you on the 4th and 8th of last month by the Thynne packet, which was to make the tour by Jamaica, wherein I acknowledged the receipt of your favour of the 28th of June. It being now near five months since the date thereof, and four since I have heard from Mrs. Laforey, and the September packet being now arrived without any letters for me, I conclude some accident must have happened to those intended for me by you and her. My letter to you by the Thynne, if it arrives safe, must be a long time getting to your hands.

After saying that our storehouses are all crammed and that we are obliged to take half the mast house to put cables and hawsers into, I have told you all that is new or material respecting my civil department here, except that upon heaving down the Russell—which ship was very leaky, having been more than once ashore, her copper rubbed off in many places, some of her bolts started, and her butts found open—it was judged necessary to new copper her. Upon taking off the old, we did not find any of her iron work injured by it, although she was one of the first ships sheathed therewith. This circumstance, I must confess, I am not altogether so well pleased with; for like the envious man who would put out one of his eyes, to deprive his enemy of both, I had flattered myself that while our ships were only half injured by its effects, the

French, which are entirely built with bolts and spikes, would be totally so.

In my letter by the Thynne I observed to you that the flag officers had all quitted this station with the fleet, and that we were left to shift for ourselves ; no commanding officer remaining to have recourse to in cases of exigency ; from whence I augured many inconveniences would arise. And I was not mistaken ; nor do I think, unless the admiral arrives soon, the greatest evil has yet passed us.

We are threatened with an attack. The enemy at the French islands are preparing for it, and only wait the arrival of some ships and troops from France to begin their enterprise. Having had occasion to write to the admiralty upon another matter I have acquainted them therewith.

This recalls to my mind the strange predicament I have stood in, since that board have signified their construction of the commission they had given me. Being in possession, at the time of receiving that letter, of Sir George Rodney's orders, I continued to act conformable thereto ; but since his departure, Sir Samuel Hood never having invested me with the smallest powers previous to his sailing for America, I became, with a broad pennant flying, the commander of the ships in this port so long [as] and no longer than they were in the usual state of fitting ; and when once out of progress of the yard, they were in fact no longer subordinate to me ; but the command of them should have become properly vested in the senior captain (who might probably be fitting and under my orders) as long as they might choose to remain here ; for their lordships' letter says my command extends only to the fitting or refitting of his Majesty's ships and the business within the yard, unless the commander-in-chief shall

think proper to extend it further. I will now give you one from among the many cases in point:

A few days ago, two American privateers cruised off this harbour for two days, and chased vessels into it; their continuance there must have been the certain loss of the packet, of whose time for sailing from St. Lucia we had received advice. I pushed out from hence two vessels and drove them off. According to the nature of the admiralty's construction of my commission, I must have applied to the senior captain, who has my pennant on board and is now fitting under my orders, to direct that service to be performed. What officer possessed of common feelings can submit to so humiliating a situation?

The short time that Sir Samuel Hood stayed here (after Sir George Rodney's departure) previous to his sailing for America, and the idea I entertained, until almost the last day, that he meant to leave Admiral Drake here, prevented my writing to him upon this matter until it was too late; the appearance of Admiral Drake off the port occasioning him to get under sail as my letter was dispatching to him.

Many material inconveniences must have resulted from the station being left unprovided for, had I not, from motives of prudence, at my own risk, taken upon me to give directions in such matters as came within my reach in this island, which he has approved, and in handsome terms thanked me for. But now, my friend, comes on the crisis. We have all reason to apprehend we shall be attacked, and that before our fleet, hampered as they are thought to be in their present service, can arrive to protect us. I have in my letter to the board said—'I am making all necessary arrangements for its (the port's) protection that the nature of my situation will admit of.' Was I to do no more, I should do nothing;

for no ship employed in service can be in a state of fitting or re-fitting; nor is any ship or vessel sent to defend the channels of the bays and creeks on each side the harbour any longer under my power, even supposing I had the command within the port. Shame for the humiliating and degrading decision the board made upon my appeal to it has made me conceal the contents of that letter; to which I may add discretion; for [if] it was once public, a series of eternal altercation and dispute would ensue from it, and I could no longer carry on the service here.

I never think of that decision but with the utmost disgust. How have I been supported in carrying their orders into execution? Was not their power disputed by an officer actually come in to refit his ship? and have they ever reprimanded him for it? and have they not in their letter drawn that very line for my conduct which I then pursued? which infers that I exceeded it; in fact I am the person reprimanded. Suppose a commander-in-chief should think proper to strike my pennant, by what authority can I, after this, do a military act? Impossible.

I join with you in the expediency of confining my command to the port of English Harbour and the fitting of the ships, but that has not hitherto been allowed me; the present commander-in-chief has been under the necessity, since he has been in America, of directing me to give orders to ships and do many acts in the military line. It cannot be otherwise, for reasons I have given you in former letters, until a commanding officer is established at this island and to reside at this port; otherwise the boats, stages, and other implements of this yard will be no longer in my power. Here is always sufficient employment for one independent of the business of this yard; but not having such to spare,

the burden has been thrown upon me ; or more probably, that an additional broad pennant cuts in upon prize money, and they expect that business to be done for nothing.

I recollect your mentioning that Sir A. Hamond, who was going out to Halifax, under the same circumstances I stand [in] here, was perfectly well satisfied with the arrangements made. Sir Andrew had more reason to be so ; he is most likely to sit down quietly in his civil line ; for being twelve years junior to me on the list, he will find many of his seniors often in port, to take that trouble off his hands ; whereas I have known of but one ¹ (and that for a time only) in the large fleets serving in these seas since I came here ; and I do not suppose there are now above half a dozen, or likely to be more, senior to me serving in the whole navy. Add to this, Sir Andrew has an additional emolument, which will increase his income to double what I receive for all my trouble, and in a country where the necessaries of life are procured at one-third the rate I pay for them here.

I will conclude with this observation :—If it is necessary that I should be vested with military command for the purpose of carrying on the complicated business in which this island from its situation is involved, let it be given to me with that dignity and emolument to which my seniority in service entitles me ; there being no reason why I should do it for nothing or for less than another appointed for it ; and let me be supported therein while I act properly. But if that is not to be, let a commanding officer be established here, and my

¹ Hotham was an established commodore ; Edmund Affleck was made so in September 1781 ; Carkett was lost in the Stirling Castle in the hurricane of October 1780. There were no others on the station senior to Laforey.

line confined to the civil branch ; but do not let me be degraded undeservedly. Excuse me, my friend, for harping again upon the old string, but fresh matter arising from its consequences has given birth to it ; it strikes in my mind, and will vibrate upon being touched. But I have complained only to you as yet ; I have for some time past flattered myself that the cause subsiding, its effects would cease of course ; but at present I can foresee nothing but war while we have anything left to lose.

My most affectionate respects attend your good family ; best remembrances to our friend Wallis.

Antigua. 21st January, 1782.

A merchant ship, deep laden and foul, undertakes to run it home from hence ; she was to sail this day from St. John's, but as they are not always very punctual, I risk this letter—in some hopes of its being in time for her, but in very little of its safe arrival—to acknowledge the receipt of and thank you for your kind favour of the 23rd October last, which I got from the mail landed by Sir Samuel Hood's fleet this morning, in his way to engage Monsieur de Grasse now besieging St. Kitts, the decision of which must, I expect, happen to-morrow.

It is now so much the practice to stop the packets at Barbados and send them out of their road, that in five months past I have had but one opportunity of writing directly to England, the consequences of which will be severely felt by the fleet very soon ; but this is no proper conveyance to tell our wants. The October packet, which was also stopped at Barbados, brought me your favours of the 8th August and 7th October last, which I had no means of answering, but by sending my letters to the fleet to get their passage as they could ; and I find that my reply to those letters, and which I dated

11th December, remain still in my friend Mr. Hunt's hands on board the *Barfleur*, and will, I hope, in spite of Monsieur de Grasse, be soon conveyed in an express with the event of the battle. A duplicate thereof went from St. Kitts in a running ship about the latter end of that month.

Those letters communicated my sentiments of Gambier's¹ behaviour to my child. The information you are now so good to give me corroborates the decision I made upon that occasion. I foresaw he would render himself, when he came to his reflection, an object of my pity, and I hope my Julia will possess herself upon this conjuncture and summon to her aid that laudable pride which a true delicacy should inspire her with. I am truly sorry for the anxiety this affair has produced in the worthy hearts of your good family, and I should be very unhappy if I was not convinced that it is impossible Mrs. Laforey can entertain any sentiments of you and yours incompatible with your honourable characters, and the experience we have so long had of your friendship towards us.

I have written fully to the board on the subject of the Duke William. I am obliged to be short to save this opportunity if possible, but will write more at large in my next, having much to say to you. Pray present my most affectionate respects to your good family, wherein I beg I may be allowed to include Mrs. Bouverie, and remember me kindly to my friend Wallis.

¹ A near relation—brother or nephew—of Lady Middleton. We may presume that he had been paying his addresses to Laforey's daughter, without declaring himself; but nothing further is known of the incident.

Antigua. 2nd September, 1782.

I wrote to you on the 15th July by the Whitby storeship, and on the 30th by the Triton frigate, and on the 11th ult. by the Achilles storeship. This is to take its chance by a running ship, for we almost despair of the July packet and expect she has shared the same fate with that of June.

The islands remaining here to the crown of Great Britain are, to be sure, of but little importance ; but by the manner we are left in when the fleet goes away, one would imagine they were thought to be of none at all. The commander-in-chief is the senior captain of the day. Admiral Drake has been coming ever since the 12th of April of immortal memory, and so has Christmas, but which will first reach the goal we have to see. I have nothing new to communicate from hence at this time. My most affectionate respects attend your good family and best compliments my friend Wallis.

Laforey returned to England after the peace, and in 1784 was appointed resident commissioner at Plymouth. From the friendly intimacy shown in his correspondence with Middleton, we may judge that it was continued without any long break ; but, if so, only those letters which had some service interest have been preserved, and of these, many are of inordinate length and are here given only in abstract. When this has been done the abstracts are enclosed in [square brackets]. It will be seen that their interest again turns mainly on the question of Laforey's position at Antigua, which was brought to the front by the celebrated promotion of admirals in 1787. When, seven years later, after the battle of the 1st June, Howe exercised a certain freedom of choice in recommending his captains for the gold medal, it was spoken of as a mistake or a misunderstanding on his part, leading to quite unintended results. Those who so argued forgot that in 1787 he had exercised a similar unwelcome discrimination in the promotion to flag rank, and raised a storm in and out of

parliament, to which a weaker or less honest man might have been compelled to bow. But in this, as on many other points on which he lacked the political merit of compromise, he felt that he had not been properly supported by the prime minister, and in the following year he resigned his office. This opened the way for Laforey, and in 1789, by an Order in Council, he was promoted to flag rank, with his original seniority of 1787.

Laforey to Middleton

Plymouth. 17th February, 1786.

. . . . Your last mentioned the death of Sir Thomas Pye, with your kind wishes that Molloy might be benefited by his friendship to him, which, however, has not taken place; his uncle having given for reason the high protection he is at present under,¹ which must end in a provision for him, and that his nieces, who really wanted it, must have his support. This, to be sure, was very true and the motive just, so he must do the best he can without it. He has lately received the strongest assurances from Mr. Pitt of being very soon provided for, and that he hoped and believed it would happen before his time in the guardship expired; and the Duke of Rutland, in a letter to him, says—‘You stand the first upon the list of my claims I have given to Mr. Pitt, all of which, I am assured, will be complied with, and you may depend upon being seriously and substantially provided for soon.’ I presume in those claims I am included, as the duke goes on by saying:—‘Remember me to the commissioner, and assure him of my best regard’; and Mr. Pitt, in a conference not long past with Captain Molloy, entering upon the subject of the Antigua government,² said

¹ The Duke of Rutland, with whom Molloy was very closely allied—on what grounds is not known.

² Much of Laforey’s early service had been in the West Indies; he had married at Antigua and seems to have had considerable

it was not yet vacant, and he could not bind himself to a promise under that circumstance, but it was more than probable it would be offered to him or me. I must observe to you that, in the same conference, Molloy had declared to him it would not at any rate suit him, and I have it from good authority that Mr. Orde has been soliciting it for his brother,¹ but without effect ; so that I flatter myself I have not lost ground in that object.

I find the Rose is to be paid off here, but not dismantled. Can you tell me for what service, or for whom she is destined ? My reasons for asking this are that the prince, who is removed to this station in the Hebe, has an idea that she is intended to carry him to North America, where, he says, Lord Howe told him he is to be made a captain and stationed. I am interested in this matter ; for, agreeable to the custom for the royal family to take up their quarters at the ' King's House,' I am at present honoured with his company whenever he is in port, and could wish to know how long it is likely to last ; for—in confidence to you—I really find it very inconvenient on account of the expense it involves, so very ill suited to my present situation. My friend and colleague at Portsmouth lives in a style that made this matter perfectly easy to himself, and, I believe, was more pleased than otherwise with this distinction.² With me, it is quite the reverse ; but I cannot decline it anyhow, and should, I apprehend, offend the king if I did. He has been with me a week, with three attendants, for whom a separate table is kept and supplied with wine, which I find property there, in which Molloy, as his daughter's husband, had now an interest.

¹ Captain, afterwards Admiral Sir John Orde. At this time he was Governor of Dominica.

² Commissioner Martin. Cf. *Journals, &c., of Sir T. Byam Martin* (*N.R.S.* xxiv. 20).

to be the custom where he last was; and I am obliged to increase considerably my establishment in every article while he is in port, which—I understand by the captain's conversation—is to be one week in three while they are on this station. Firing, which I have before found—to keep this house (the coldest I ever inhabited) tolerably warm—to be a very heavy article, has, since it has been open upon this occasion, been enormous, every room being occupied by people of all descriptions continually levying him. Pray, might I not, upon this contingency, give an order for a supply of coals from the smithery equal to the extra expense of them, for 'the service of his Majesty'? I think I cannot publicly ask it of the board, because there may be an indelicacy in the explanation of the reasons; but if you are of opinion it will be allowed, I will venture to do it.

But, my friend, there is a worse evil attending this, that neither expense nor prudence can guard against. His conduct here has by no means been similar to what my friend, Mr. Martin, represented it to me to have been at Portsmouth, which he called not only irreproachable, but amiable, insomuch that it gained universal approbation and applause. Should he continue in the mode he has begun here, I apprehend it certainly will reach the king's ears, and fear it may involve me in his displeasure, by the comparison that will be drawn from the different effects of our influence over him. I know not to what extent Mr. Martin has ventured to exert his; but I am quite a stranger to him; and having never received any commands concerning him, cannot presume to obtrude my advice or opinion upon him, so that you may well conceive that I am not a little anxious to know when he will be otherwise disposed of

25th February, 1787.

The boatswain of the *Chichester*, receiving ship, was—some days past—beaten and ill-treated by the surgeon's mate and a midshipman belonging to the *Winchester*, whose people were aboard her. The commanding officer applied to the admiral for a court-martial, and one is ordered to be held to-morrow on the surgeon's mate. Captain Chamberlayne, who is to be the president, applied to me for information whether the officers of the ships in ordinary are subject to military discipline; to which I could not give him a decisive answer, having my doubts thereon. The clauses in the articles of war confine the penalties to such as are 'in or belonging to the fleet'; under which denomination I am not clear that ships out of commission are comprehended. . . . If officers belonging to ships so situated are subject to military discipline, they become a part of the fleet, and fall under the command of the admiral at the port, subject to his orders and control; and of course the ordinary of the yard, doing duty on board the ships, are equally so with their officers; whereas the contrary mode of regulation is the practice, the civil department at the port entirely directing that duty, which no military commander ever interferes with.

[If they are not under military discipline, the surgeon's mate has, at worst, been guilty of a common assault; if, on the other hand, they are, his offence is an act of violence against a superior officer.]

3rd October, 1787.

. . . In a former letter to you, I mentioned that not the least notice had been given to me of the intentions of our superiors on my subject, and Captain Rowe of the *Myrmidon*, who is just come from

Portsmouth, tells me he understands that Mr. Martin is in the same situation exactly.

I observe your remark upon Mr. Boscawen's *protégés*; but I promise myself that our poor friend G. B.¹ and I do not stand in the same point of view with respect to pretensions; for I am sorry to say—in confidence to you—that there subsists a general disapprobation, among his brother officers, of his conduct in the last war; and that not confined to a few, but extended to many instances, of which the present premier cannot be ignorant. What objections may be offered to me, I shall know, because I intend in due time to ask. If I am correct in my own feelings, I think I can boldly stand forth and call for them. There are more than two among the numbers put by who will conceive they have a right to complain, and I do imagine no small clamour will be made on this head when the parliament meets. However, with this I have nothing to do. I think my predicament peculiar and singular, and I will draw no conclusions from present appearances. I have always been encouraged, from the deportment of the premier to me, to flatter myself that I stand upon a respectable footing with him.

I am extremely glad to find you keep your situation.² It is as honourable for you as it is advantageous for the public.

¹ George Balfour, posted the same day as Laforey (26th July, 1758) by Boscawen, for gallantry at Louisbourg, and bringing out the *Bienfaisant*. Of the 'general disapprobation'—of which Laforey speaks—it is impossible now to say anything; but though he served pretty steadily during the peace, continuously during the war, and commanded the *Conqueror* on the 12th April, he was passed over in this promotion, and did not get even the retired rank till after Howe's resignation.

² Cf. *post*, pp. 258–60; Middleton to Pitt, 23 Sept., 1787.

18th October, 1787.

[Lord Howe's letter is a mere answer to the question I asked, and is not decisive on the subject. As soon as I can get together the necessary papers, I shall, in respectful terms, expostulate on the reasons alleged for my being passed by.]

A poor fellow, named Philip de Santo, who has been twenty-five years in the service, and a pensioner, who has served ever since the peace as a deputy purser, is now turned adrift by the commissioning of so many ships; and with a wife and five children is starving. He is a sober, good man. I shall be much obliged to you to give him a cook's warrant. I only know him by his regular and proper conduct in the employment he has took.

25th October, 1787.

[I enclose you a copy of a letter I have just received from Lord Howe. It is very much what I expected, and shows that—as I supposed all along—'my claim must go to the king.' In answering it, I shall produce my precedents, which he calls for, and explain 'my conception of my commission, in the very letter of the words.' His lordship's letter reminds me of the old ballad:—

Sabina saw, but would not see;
Sabina heard, but would not hear.¹]

Enclosure

Lord Howe to Commissioner Laforey

Admiralty. 23rd October, 1787.

Sir,—I must beg you will be assured that, in replying to your favour of the 15th instant, I do not mean to impeach the merit of your services, or competency for the station to which your views are now

¹ D'Urfey, *Pills to purge Melancholy* (1714), i. 219.

directed, how much soever I may differ with you in sentiment on the subject of your application, being persuaded your professional talents will entitle you to additional esteem, whenever an opportunity for the further exemplification of them is afforded.

As you do not name the particular officers to whom you refer, I am not qualified to offer an opinion how far the instances you allude to may seem to correspond in circumstance with your situation. Neither would it be seasonable to explain at large the reasons which render it so difficult for me to conceive the propriety of that commission on which you found your plea to the continuance of a military character blended with the civil appointment as a commissioner of the navy resident at Antigua; not being yourself subject—that the commission anywhere expresses—to the control of the naval commander-in-chief, or amenable, on any imputation on your conduct, to the judgment of a court-martial. I shall therefore only suggest that I conceive it to be a natural consequence and rule of the service, that when an officer quits his military charge to engage in a civil employment in time of war, his claim to military distinctions is transferred to juniors on the list.

When the king, however, is pleased to interpose for making a deviation from that rule, to that authority I shall ever submit.

I am, with great esteem, &c.,

HOWE.

Laforey to Middleton

26th October, 1787.

[Commissioner Proby¹ writes to me that Lord Howe has told him that your promotion to the rank

¹ Charles Proby, younger brother of the Earl of Carysfort, a captain of 1746, and at this time commissioner at Chatham.

of rear-admiral does not make a vacancy at the navy board. He is therefore 'of opinion that himself, Mr. Martin and I have a right to our rank as admirals also, and proposes our joining in a memorial to the king, after previously applying to the admiralty and the minister for that purpose.' I think it probable that this has been suggested to him by his relation and friend the Marquis of Stafford,¹ who will push it for him in the council; and Lord Howe may be disposed to favour it, 'as I know he is particularly attached to Mr. Martin.'

[I have answered him that 'I am in a different pursuit'; and shall comply with Lord Howe's commands to name the precedents on which I hang my pretensions.

[27th October.—I enclose a copy of the letter I have this day sent to Lord Howe. The validity of a commission given by the admiralty cannot be seriously disputed. 'If that power authorised the holder of it to command military men, it must, of course, be a military commission; if it were not perfect in all its forms, the defect rests with them and not with the officer who acted under it, who—if his lordship determines the contrary—may stand fair to find his promotion in Newgate. . . . Pray, when you see Lord Sandwich and find him disposed to laugh, tell his lordship what he has brought me to.']

Enclosure

Laforey to Lord Howe

27th October, 1787.

. . . [The precedents to which I referred were the cases of Vice-Admiral Arbuthnot and Rear-

¹ His first cousin, on the mother's side.

Admiral Sir Richard Hughes. The admirals made from Portsmouth yard during the late war were Vice-Admiral Gambier and Vice-Admiral Lord Hood; and lastly, the appointment of Sir Andrew Hamond to the command at Chatham, in succession to his employment at Halifax.

‘The point I have to establish is that I exercised military power abroad by virtue of a commission to command in a military line.’ It was so understood by the commanders-in-chief there; they exercised authority over me; and by orders from them, I ordered courts martial to be held, ‘and at times presided thereat.’ It was impossible for me to suppose myself ‘not equally amenable thereto.’]

Laforey to Middleton

5th November, 1787.

I will advert to what you say and recommend to the officers the consideration of a timely provision of all supplies necessary for accelerating a future armament, from the instances they have now before them of what may have been deficient in this; and I have talked with Mr. Pollard upon the situation the flat-bottomed boats were found in when they might have been wanted for an immediate purpose. [Seven of the nine were put by in good repair, but, being planked with elm, were now found to be ‘in a state of considerable decay.’ Some other material must in future be used. The other two boats were intended to be repaired when opportunity served.]

[I send you the copy of a letter I have received from Lord Howe. If more solid distinctions cannot be advanced, I can but wonder that I am not at once referred to the fountain head; but it is not my business to go there without the premier, if I can carry him with me.

[I fear that the death¹ of the Duke of Rutland will be a great loss to Molloy. However Pitt has so publicly engaged himself, that I think he cannot fail in keeping his promise. He will always have the interest of the duke's connexions; and was promised by the duke a seat in parliament for one of his boroughs, to 'consider as his own for life, and use for his own benefit, independent of any part he might take in politics.']

Enclosure

Lord Howe to Commissioner Laforey

Admiralty. 2nd November, 1787.

Sir,—The appointments, both of Sir Richard Hughes and Admiral Arbuthnot, as commissioners at Halifax, preceded the commencement of hostilities. The Admirals Gambier and Lord Hood obtained their civil employments also during peace. Sir Andrew Hamond, under exactly similar circumstances with you, resumed his nautic character before his title to promotion came in question. But the king's pleasure having been signified in the late nomination of flag officers, your claim to the same distinction could only be made valid by the king's authority, to which you have an undoubted right to appeal against any subordinate opinion of the board, and, in all cases, of, Sir. . . .

Laforey to Middleton

Plymouth Yard. 11th November, 1787.

[I enclose to you my reply to Lord Howe, giving my reasons for wishing my application to the king to be made through him, rather than in my own

¹ 24th October, 1787.

person. I thought it both proper and politic to do this, though I do not expect his lordship will accede to my wish.

[Lord Chatham writes to Molloy that his brother (W. Pitt) is now more than ever interested in providing for him.]

Enclosure

Laforey to Lord Howe

10th November, 1787.

[Your lordship is better able than I to determine how far the precedents I adduced apply in my case; but it appeared to me that the war had begun in America when Commissioners Arbuthnot¹ and Sir Richard Hughes² were sent out to Halifax; and had spread to Europe when Lord Hood³ was removed from the command of the *Courageux* to Portsmouth yard. But waiving these precedents, and admitting—for the moment—‘that the commission under which I acted in a military capacity’ at Antigua was invalid, I submit that my service afloat, during the late war, was little less than that of some of those officers lately promoted to their flag, and that having been usefully employed in the public service for the rest of the time ought not to be considered as obliterating all claim on account of the former service.

[If Sir Andrew Hamond has removed any bar to his promotion by returning into employ, I too offered my services; and may claim to have been more than 40 years in the navy, ‘30 of them in actual employment,’ and very nearly that time a post captain; have served under the most distinguished commanders, and without a single mark of their dis-

¹ 1775.

² 2 June, 1778.

³ 26 January, 1778.

pleasure or the disapprobation of the admiralty. My position with respect to the civil officers whom I have been placed here to superintend will be humiliating and unendurable, if they see me passed by in promotion and degraded to their own level. 'I will promise myself that this will not be my lot, and will hope that I shall obtain my rank through your lordship's favourable recommendation of me to the king.']

Laforey to Middleton

15th November, 1787.

[Lord Howe's letter, just received, is quite civil and friendly in pointing out the way I should proceed. I am in doubt whether to memorialize the king alone, or the king in council. The former will, I suppose, involve my cooling my heels in London for some time; and I understand that memorials, so presented, are at once passed to another hand, so that the application has more form than substance in it. I will defer thanking Lord Howe till I hear from you.]

We have heard long ago that Mr. Woodley¹ was aiming at the government of the Leeward Islands, through the interest of his son-in-law, Mr. Bankes; but Mr. Pitt has, since that time, repeatedly assured Molloy of the refusal of it, if it became vacant before anything more eligible offered for him. . . . The present [governor] had asked leave of absence, on account of his bad state of health, for six months, and to be allowed to return again on its expiration. The former was granted, but the latter refused; on which account he has not availed himself of it. Our intelligence from thence says that

¹ William Woodley. His daughter Frances married, in 1784, Henry Bankes, M.P. for Corfe Castle, 1780 to 1826. See *D.N.B.*

he shuts himself up and is continually drunk ; so that he never can be admitted to remain in that situation long, even if he can stand such external and internal heating, which, I suppose, must end him soon.

Enclosure

Lord Howe to Commissioner Laforey

Admiralty. 13th November, 1787.

Sir,—Whichsoever of our different opinions on the subject of our late correspondence may be most just, it will be wholly unnecessary for me to trouble you with further explanations concerning them, now that the mode of proceeding to obtain the desired effect is confined to an application to the king or to his Majesty in council, setting forth in the fullest and most pointed terms the claim and grounds of dissatisfaction you conceive you have just reason to assert, on being left out of the late promotion of flag officers. I have understood that some intention to the same purport is proposed by the two other commissioners resident at the out-ports. Your pretensions will be brought, in this manner, into regular discussion, and I cannot have a wish that you should be disappointed in any pursuit consistent with the benefit of the public service, or to refuse such assistance as may be proper for me to render on the same occasion ; being . . .

HOWE.

Laforey to Middleton

22nd November, 1787.

[Enclosing his memorial to the king in council, which he asks Middleton to have delivered by one of his clerks. He has sent a copy of it to Lord Howe.]

19th December, 1787.

[Considering the correspondence that has passed between me and Lord Howe, it seems scarcely possible that he can oppose my claim at the council, whatever—for the sake of consistency—he may have thought it right to do at the admiralty. If the decision of the council should be unfavourable, I have been encouraged to precipitate a measure which, otherwise, I should have advised with my friends upon.]

23rd January, 1788.

[Remarks on the works at Antigua, on which Commodore Parker¹ has reported unfavourably—‘in a style of asperity, as if he was resolved not to be pleased with anything that has been or is proposed to be done.’]

Lord Howe’s long fit of the gout has protracted all the operations here. Sir Hyde Parker² is upon thorns to get superseded. The Impregnable and Cumberland are continued in commission and remain in a state of ordinary, the officers and crew of the latter³ occupying one of the receiving ships; as to Macbride, he has contrived to steal his ship into such forwardness that they can live on board her. The Hero, with 700 men on board, still remains in commission; all the guardships continue with their powder and their sea stores on board. Is this inadvertence? or is there something brewing in the state of Denmark?

¹ William Parker, a captain of 1777; commanded the Audacious in her celebrated action with the Révolutionnaire, on 28th May, 1794. As a rear-admiral, was third in command in the battle of Cape St. Vincent, for which he was made a baronet. He died, a vice-admiral, in 1802.

² Then captain of the Orion, commissioned for the Dutch armament.

³ So in MS., but the Impregnable is meant. The Cumberland was Macbride’s ship.

25th May, 1788.

[I have written to your board about the 'violence and insults' offered by some of the shipwrights and apprentices of the yard to others for working what they call 'task or job.' It is highly necessary that this seditious and riotous disposition should be curbed; it is worst among the apprentices—not boys, but young men nearly out of their time. It may perhaps be advantageous to introduce task work generally here, as in the other yards.]

31st May, 1788.

[By this same post, your board will receive another letter from me about the riotous conduct of the shipwrights. Their ostensible leaders are two of the under officers of the yard, but these are really only the instruments of Groseleir (?)—apparently the master shipwright, but certainly an officer of recognised position—who is the author of the whole disturbance. He is 'of so crooked and perverse a disposition,' that, instead of being able to place dependence on him, I am obliged to be perpetually on my guard against him. 'I know not what can be done to alter this man, without a new mind could be instilled into him.']

This is the last of these letters from Laforey. On 3rd November, 1789, he was created a baronet; on the 10th, promoted to be rear-admiral of the red, with seniority 24th September, 1787. A few days later he went out as commander-in-chief at the Leeward Islands, where he remained till the summer of 1793. He was made vice-admiral on 1st February, 1793, and admiral on 1st June, 1795. In the summer of 1795 he again went out to the Leeward Islands, but was recalled early in the following year, and died on the passage home, 14th June, 1796. A few letters during his last command are given later, *post*, pp. 414 sqq.

MIDDLETON TO WILLIAM PITT¹

20th January, 1783.

Sir Charles Middleton presents his compliments to Mr. Chancellor Pitt, and begs leave to inform him, that the letters from the navy board to the admiralty, and transmitted by them to the treasury, on the subject of the forests, bear date: 9th August, 1768, 30th May, 1769, and 9th January, 1770.

Sir Charles Middleton submits to Mr. Pitt the propriety of enquiring into and putting a stop to every kind of fee or perquisite in the forests; of causing the amount of every fall, whether dotards or sound timber, to be paid into the treasury, and suffering no lodge, or even road, to be repaired without a survey and estimate; and the amount when finished to be paid by the treasury, instead of leaving it, as at present, to individuals by falls of timber.

It appears to Sir Charles that joining the comptroller and surveyor of the navy to the surveyor general of the forests, as commissioners who may be entrusted with the execution of the act, and directing them to make occasional visitations and to report to the admiralty or treasury any abuses or neglects that may appear to them, will have a better effect than any other means that can be pointed out for securing the old as well as growing timber. At present the naval purveyors, for want of such inspection, are not only very careless, but have got into habits of intimacy with the neighbouring farmers and gentlemen, and suffer abuses of every kind, to a very great extent.

¹ Unless otherwise noted, the letters to Pitt are printed from the final copy in the Record Office—*Chatham Papers*, III.

LORD HOWE¹ TO MIDDLETON

[Holograph.]

Admiralty Office. 19th February, 1783.

Sir,—I am favoured with your letter of the 17th, wherein (with an account of the tonnage of transports in the naval branch) you let me know the mode you deem absolutely necessary for carrying on the service with propriety and dispatch ; and farther apprise me of the extensive correspondence in which the comptroller must then be necessarily engaged.

As you do not particularise the alterations in the constitution of the admiralty and navy boards, which you have in contemplation, I see no cause to change my present sentiments upon them ; nor² to think a personal explanation of an arrangement consisting of many parts (and first proposed to take immediate effect, though afterwards found to be imperfect in its construction) may not tend to promote rather than delay the execution of the plan.

To be sure, if the comptroller is left unassisted by a due exertion of his brethren in their several departments, the weight of business must be out of all proportion too great for his single attention, and I shall be glad to concert measures with you for correcting that omission. The war being now at an end, the expedients to be adopted for keeping the intended operations of it secret do not need discussion at this time.

I am, with great respect, Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

HOWE.

¹ Howe relieved Keppel at the admiralty on 30th January, 1783, and was in turn relieved by him on 10th April. He finally succeeded Keppel on 31st December.

² So in MS.

MIDDLETON TO LORD KEPPEL

[Corrected copy. Autograph.]

18th July, 1783.

My Lord,—When I consider Admiral Gambier's¹ situation and the circumstances of his family, I cannot wonder at his anxiety and uneasiness. His affairs are in the utmost disorder, his children unsettled, and their mother at this time without hope of recovery; these considerations, my lord, aggravated by a state of disappointment and uncertainty would affect a stronger mind than Admiral Gambier's is at present. He had flattered himself, too, that the situation of the flagship would have saved him a considerable expense in accommodation; but the Europa has got so forward in equipment and without any one preparation on his part, that he is deprived of this advantage also. I mention these circumstances to your lordship in excuse for his impatience; but I flatter myself, the king will not object to your lordship's nomination, and that a short time will relieve him from his present uncertainty. [I have not yet communicated Sir John Elliott's² opinion of his wife's situation; but he assured me this morning that no one symptom appeared in her favour.³] A balsam under this grievous affliction will be an act of great humanity to both, and I flatter myself your lordship will not withhold it longer than is necessary for your own situation.

The transports from the outports have all sailed, and the greatest part of those from the river; what remains are getting ready with all possible dispatch;

¹ James Gambier, the elder; and Middleton's brother-in-law.

² A fashionable physician of the day. Cf. *D.N.B.*, where his professional knowledge is very slightly spoken of.

³ Deleted.

but, as I find by Admiral Digby's letter to me, that he is greatly disappointed from the want of the promised assistance from the West Indies, I would propose taking up 8 or 10,000 tons more in the river, if they can be procured, so as to sail in the course of next month ; and on this idea, confirmed by your lordship's opinion, I will take secret measures accordingly, and endeavour to counter-balance the expense as much as possible by paying off those expected from America as fast as they arrive in England. I see no other practicable method of executing this service in time and obviating present difficulties.

If the provisions just arrived on account of the navy from the West Indies had been thrown into the sea, and the transports proceeded to New York, the public would have saved some thousands by the measure ; but the war departments of this country are neither calculated for dispatch nor economy in their present state ; and till some links are added to connect the chain of communication, the service and treasury must both suffer.

I shall have pleasure in affording your lordship any information in my power on the subject of fees ; they cannot be corrected without increased salaries and additional appointments, but I am satisfied the public would be a considerable gainer by the alteration, and many abuses removed that certainly exist to a very great degree at present.

My own time has been fully occupied of late in examining and arranging the business of office, so that the multiplicity of accounts belonging to the separate branches may be brought into some system and properly examined in future. The present moment is the time for securing this object and I shall have great reason for satisfaction if I can accomplish it ; but the whole is become a monster

of such magnitude and extent, that I am frequently thrown into despondency, and despair of my own strength or ability in reducing it into any kind of order. My outline, however, is now finished, and as soon as I am able to bring the materials into some degree of arrangement, I will turn my attention to the fees in office, and communicate to your lordship what occurs to me on the subject.

Those taken by the officers and clerks in the dockyards fall very heavy on the public, and those taken in office bear hard on individuals of every class. The funding of the latter on a fixed establishment is the best plan that appears to me for correcting the latter; and appointing men of knowledge and uncorruptible integrity for receiving and selling stores will have the same effect in the dockyards. The success that has attended this measure in the army provisions is so generally known as to need no other confirmation; but I was so well aware of its solely depending on the choice of the men, that I made the appointment the *sine qua non* of accepting the charge of army victuallers.

If your lordship will suffer me to make the trial at the two great receiving yards of Deptford and Woolwich, I will become answerable for the success; but the gentlemen whom I mean to recommend must have salaries equal to the confinement and trust that will necessarily attend their office. The gentlemen I mean are Captain Teer and Mr. Cherry. I have had trial of both in situations that required the utmost firmness and integrity, and they have answered my fullest expectation; their ability and knowledge in the business are equally desirable; and when either of these qualifications are wanting, no good can arise from the appointment. If the choice is a good one they will individually save many thousands annually to the public, and eradicate

an evil that has no bounds under the present establishment of dockyard officers.

If the idea I have hinted for the navy office takes place, it must begin with the commissioners' clerks ; which,¹ though considerable in its profits to some members of that board and established by long custom, is neither honourable in appearance nor productive of good consequences. I do not, however, mean by this regulation to deprive offices of trust and labour of their just advantages, but to distinguish such from others that inherit neither, and which ought to be a principle in all reformatations. This distinction, though unpleasing on my part, is a necessary one ; and as I have chalked out a line of duty for every commissioner in the regulations now forming, by which every account and return sent into office must necessarily be examined by principals ; and shall propose, on that account, a liberal but fixed allowance, without a fee or perquisite, according to the degree of trust and attendance, they can have no reason to complain, and the public will be a considerable gainer by the alteration.

I have only to add that in giving my opinion or recommending individuals for the first trial of a new institution, I trust to your lordship's candour to believe that I have no one object to serve, but the public good ; being with great truth, . . .

¹ A pencilled correction by another hand (perhaps Thomson's) explains this tangled sentence which may be read—'for though the profits accruing to some members of the board from the premium on such appointments are considerable and established by long custom, the system is neither &c.'

LORD KEPPEL TO MIDDLETON

Admiralty. 26th August, 1783.

Dear Sir Charles,—Sir George Savile was with me soon after you left the admiralty, nevertheless we are to meet on Thursday next at eleven o'clock at this house. His papers he left with me, which I here enclose to you that you may consider them before Thursday and make your notes upon them. I wish you to return them any time before our meeting.

The admiralty had the navy board's letter upon the matter of the Irresistible sailing on shore. She must be unloaded, which we have ordered; and the Carnatic will be directed to proceed to Plymouth, without being replaced by any other ship as guard-ship in the Medway. The Snipe will return to the Medway after her Gibraltar service is over.

Your very obedient and humble servant,

KEPPEL.

Memorandum by Middleton

Sir George Savile's plan¹ in my opinion bids the fairest of any I have seen for checking the abominable and destructive practice of smuggling, and seems, as far as I can judge of it, free from any objections that can be made on the part of the fair trade. Cutters are by no means calculated for fair trade, but the best constructed in form and rigging of any vessels in our seas for smuggling.² Carvel and clinker built are the same in point of quality and shape; both ought to be prohibited. It will be

¹ This was returned.

² Bowen, on the other hand, with practical experience, gave a distinct preference to luggers. Cf. *post*, p. 308.

necessary however to relax a little from the form laid down by Sir G. Savile for burden and allow of lines somewhat finer ; otherwise coasters may not be able to clear a lee shore, if caught on it in a gale of wind. A very little alteration will be sufficient for this purpose and not add greatly to their speed in sailing. Confining sloop and lugger rigged vessels to a certain proportion of mast and canvas will effectually prevent them getting off when chased, and be sufficient for the purposes of trade. I see no occasion, however, for any such vessels as a lugger for trade, though sloops are of all vessels the most easily managed with few men, and the best calculated for narrow channels and rivers. The number of men may be easily calculated when the tonnage and kind of rigging is ascertained. The number of guns and small arms may be easily fixed. I take it for granted that the restriction will be confined to the coasts of Great Britain and Ireland, and the channels belonging to them, but to leave the foreign trade free. The kind of rowing boats belonging to such vessels should be likewise fixed, and no fast rowing ones allowed. Cutters of all sizes are dangerous, as they sail fast, and particularly to windward. From these circumstances, the cruisers and revenue vessels have no chance of coming up with them, unless accident brings them near to each other at daybreak. Suffer no vessels, therefore, of this kind for trade, but if insisted on as necessary, shorten their masts and bow-sprits to the size of sloops of the same burden, and the danger is remedied.

NAVY BOARD TO PHILIP STEPHENS

[*Rough draft, in Middleton's hand.*]

1st October, 1783.

Be pleased to inform the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that having taken into our consideration the many enormous abuses committed under the indulgence of chips, and wishing to apply every remedy in our power to so growing and wasteful an evil, we have embraced the first opportunity since the return of peace to renew and enforce the old standing rules of the navy concerning them. But though the execution of their orders has been pressed from time to time, yet, on attempting the present reformation, we found that the abuse had reached such a dangerous height as required firmness and resolution to encounter it. Our attempt, however, has produced an offer from the Plymouth yard to give up the privilege of chips for 5*d.* per day to the shipwrights—a sum that, with the present pay, will be 1*s.* 6*d.* less than house carpenters receive in London, and 2*s.* 6*d.* the day less than is given in merchant yards.

The custom hitherto has been for the men to leave off work, perhaps half an hour before bell ringing, and even during working hours, to cut up clandestinely useful timber to complete their bundles; these are frequently sold as high as 1*s.* per cwt., and probably cost the public twice as much. And though there be nothing so frequent in our minutes as orders respecting chips, yet the abuse has still returned, and public affairs at times so critically circumstanced as to put it out of the officers' power to take proper notice of it.

Upon these considerations and the improbability of keeping this evil under proper restraint, we

submit to their lordships the proposal of empowering us to treat immediately with the shipwrights of Plymouth yard, as an example to the other yards, who, we doubt not, will accept the proposal if we can once establish it at any particular place. We would propose 4*d.* instead of 5*d.* to the shipwrights, and 2*d.* to the house carpenters, and 2*d.* to the present servants, till they have finished the terms of their apprenticeships. These additional wages to be entered as extra sums in the pay books, in lieu of chips, that the perquisites may never, on any pretence, come into future use. That there should be no alteration in the other extra pay, and that no servant, after the present set, should be entitled to chips or any allowance in lieu of them.

By seizing the present opportunity, which we most seriously recommend to their lordships, the public will have the full advantage of the common working hours; incredible quantities of useful timber will be preserved from waste; opportunities of secreting valuable stores—such as copper, brass, &c.—will be taken away, and the discipline of the yards in a great measure restored. In short, by closing in with the present proposal, an evil, for which no effectual remedy could ever be found, yet of such a pernicious growing nature as to threaten the worst consequences to the service, will be at once subdued and the public gain in time and save in timber and other stores infinitely beyond the additional expense. Indeed the expense can hardly be reckoned more than an equivalent for the working time that is now lost in making up the bundles.

G. C. ; J. W. ; E. H. ; G. M. ; G. R. ; W. C. ;
S. W.

[The initials stand for :—[Not identified ¹]; Sir John Williams and Edward Hunt, Surveyors ; George Marsh, Clerk of the Acts ; George Rogers, Comptroller of the Treasurer's Accounts ; William Campbell, Comptroller of Storekeepers' Accounts ; Samuel Wallis, Extra Commissioner.]

MIDDLETON TO PHILIP STEPHENS

[*Rough draft.*]

8th December, 1783.

Sir,—As their lordships will receive, together with this, a letter from the navy board on the proposed reduction in this office and the several dockyards, I beg leave to communicate some observations on the subject, that could not be introduced in that letter, and which my experience has enabled me to make.

The business of the navy office since its first institution has been more than doubled, from the very great increase of the navy ; and though in a great measure professional, particularly in the comptroller's branch, yet the appointments that have gradually taken place have precluded the seamen from every one of the established offices. This improper arrangement has made it necessary, in time of war, to call in the assistance of sea officers under the title of extra commissioners, and which would have been in every respect unnecessary if the original practice had been continued of retaining seamen for particular branches of the comptroller's department. When their lordships consider that every question relating to sea matters in the civil line are referred to the navy board, and the comptroller is the only established commissioner that can answer them ; that the providing, assorting and transporting of sea stores can only, with safety,

¹ There was no G. C. on the navy board at this time. The name of the comptroller, C. M., should have been the first.

be entrusted to a sea officer ; that such only are competent to examine log-books, journals, officers' accounts, &c., and to judge on the variety of claims in payments, and to supply the occasional absence of the dockyard commissioners, the necessity of professional assistance must appear in the strongest light.

One of the present extra commissioners has very properly been appointed to superintend the slop office, by which a considerable reduction of expense has been made in that department ; and till the other can be also established, it will be necessary to continue him to assist the comptroller in the examination of sea returns, which, from the great increase of the navy, are become so numerous as to require the utmost attention from the whole, with every advantage of professional knowledge. As soon as this necessary arrangement can take place, the present number of commissioners may be considerably reduced, and the business conducted, both in peace and war, without any addition of any at the navy board.

The gentlemen at this time employed are officers of ability,¹ and have been unwearied in their application during the late war ; the lines of examination chalked out for them are numerous and important, and cannot otherways be provided for as the board is now constituted. [The² want of official knowledge in officers appointed to superintend the complicated duty of the dockyards, without ever having been trained to business at the board, has occasioned much inconvenience to the public service, and which will also be obviated by returning to the original practice of choosing them from those employed at the board.]

¹ Captains Le Cras and Wallis.

² Deleted in the draft.

What is here proposed will be found the most economical to the public and the most advantageous to the sea service ; and till such an arrangement can be accomplished, it will be necessary to continue the assistance of the present sea commissioners. On a consideration of the whole, their lordships will clearly see, that the proper advantage of having sea officers in this department cannot be obtained by occasional appointments of them when a war breaks out ; it requires a long time and great application to make themselves masters of the various lines of duty that must necessarily be committed to them.

MEMORANDA

Duty of Captains in the Navy

[*Rough Copy.*]

As the good or bad conduct of every person on board of a king's ship depends in a great measure on the example and diligence of the captain, I have selected him as the instrument under God by which the morals of seamen are to be corrected and established.

By the naval instructions, Divine service is to be performed morning and evening, on board of every king's ship, according to the liturgy of the Church of England ; and a sermon preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent it. The commanders, by the same instructions, are strictly required to shew in themselves a good example of honour and virtue to their officers and men ; and next, to be very vigilant in inspecting the behaviour of all such as are under them, and to discountenance and suppress all dissolute, immoral and disorderly practices, and also

such as are contrary to the rules of discipline and obedience, and to correct those who are guilty of the same, according to the usage of the sea.

If any shall be heard to swear, curse, or blaspheme the name of God, the captain is strictly required to punish them for every offence, by causing them to wear a wooden collar, or some other shameful badge of distinction, for so long a time as he shall judge proper. If he be a commission officer, he shall forfeit one shilling for such offence; and a warrant or inferior officer, sixpence. He who is guilty of drunkenness, if a seaman, shall be put in irons until he is sober, but if an officer he shall forfeit two days' pay.

Lastly, whereas the charge and command of the ship, and the officers and men serving therein are entirely entrusted to the captain, and the welfare and good management of the whole does in especial manner depend upon his economy and prudence, he is to understand, though the several rules contained in the following parts of this book¹ are sorted into different chapters for better order and clearness, that nevertheless, he is himself responsible for the whole conduct and good government of the ship and for the due execution of all regulations here set down, which concern the several duties of the officers and company of the ship, who are to obey him in all things which he shall direct for his Majesty's service.

From this transcript you will perceive that the captain of a king's ship has full authority to govern those who are placed under him; and if the admiralty would furnish the means, and the captain execute his instructions, no set of men in the community can be better placed for religious instruction than seamen.

That the whole is practicable we cannot doubt, otherwise no such rules would be given. The truth

¹ *Sc.* the printed Instructions.

is that they are practicable, though seldom practised. I was sixteen years in the sea service before I was made a captain, and never, during that time, heard prayers or divine service performed a-board of ship, nor any pains taken to check vice or immorality, further than they interfered with the common duty of the ship. As soon as I became a captain I began reading prayers myself to the ship's company of a Sunday, and also a sermon. I continued this practice as long as I was in commission and without a chaplain, and it never was omitted when I had one. I did not indeed venture to carry it further than Sundays, because the practice was confined to those days by the very few ships who had chaplains, when followed at all; and I should have only acquired the name of methodist or enthusiast if I attempted it. I am confident, however, it is very practicable as far as a short service, on most days; and there is nothing wanting to enforce it, but a strict order from the admiralty and appointing proper chaplains to execute it. So far from impracticable, I have, in more instances than one, gone through the whole service myself, with the greatest part of the ship's company attending, while in chase of an enemy. No ship above a 20-gun ship should be without a chaplain, as the allowance made by the public, even in the smallest, is equal to a good curacy, besides the provision and prospect of prize money; but if the pay should be thought too small, let it be 36-gun frigates and upwards.

In flag and commanding officers' ships, the chaplain should be in priest's orders for the purpose of administering the Sacrament on board the several ships of the squadron; as I never knew an instance of its being administered on board of any ship, and I see no reason whatever for not giving it, but that the chaplains are seldom in priest's orders. In the

last war, it was very general to allow chaplains to large ships on the application of the captain, or when interest was made at the admiralty to procure a warrant for a friend. Sufficient attention was not always paid to the character of person ; and in many, very many instances, the name of the chaplain was kept upon the books, when he himself was either serving his own living or as a curate to some other person. Some check indeed was given to this abuse by requiring him to produce to the commissioners who superintended the payment, a certificate from the captain that he had performed divine service as often as it was required of him. But this vague certificate depending on the disposition of the captain, it was not often refused, and the order of course evaded.

Drunkenness and swearing never found room in any ship I commanded ; and the rules, if you observe my book,¹ are very simple but always followed upon ; no women¹ were ever admitted but such as were known to be wives to the seamen, and in short the ships' companies were as regular as any private family. A great part however of this regularity was owing to good discipline and not the effects of religion. I had seldom a chaplain on board, and could do no more myself than show myself a friend to religion. But I am confident—if good chaplains were appointed to the king's ships, and the regulations I have pointed out enforced by the admiralty, and carried punctually into execution by the clergymen, leaving it to the men to attend or not, as the duty of the ship would permit, but to be always there, as well as the officers, when neither weather nor service interfered ; if he had the power of distributing bibles and other good books amongst the seamen as he saw occasion, to be paid for by

¹ Cf. *ante*, vol. i. pp. 40, 45.

themselves at pay day—I have little doubt but our seamen would be amongst the foremost of the lower classes of the people in examples of piety and good conduct. Much—very much will depend on the character of the captain.

Guard-Ships

Ships which being constantly in roads or harbours with a diminished complement of men cannot contain seamen; they are of too active a disposition to continue in ships of this character. What remain, therefore, are aged men who have families and who must be discharged when war is declared.—Vide Muster-books of guard-ships at the beginning of last war. If such ships, therefore, are continued, both officers and men should take their turns of duty in cruising vessels, and none exempted; or their own ships sent frequently to sea. Guard-ships, in their best state, have always been calculated to destroy the very idea of discipline in officers and men. They must originally have [been] established on theory, and have been continued by custom, self-interest and a want of knowledge of their destructive consequences.

It is true the board of admiralty, in 1771, endeavoured to keep these ships fit for real service, by ordering that only able seamen should be entered in them, and consequently no other rating in the books. But the only consequence of this regulation might have been foreseen—that the books would differ from what they had been, but not the men; or, that the number would never be complete. The greater part of the captains have looked on guard-ships as a sort of doubling their half-pay, without even a pretence of doing their duty; nor does this idea stop at the commander, but pervades

the whole. The officers, by degrees, lose every appearance of duty, are led insensibly into habits infinitely more destructive to them than being unemployed; and the companies are taught that these ships are only to be looked upon as private conveniences. In a word, the active habits, which every officer must acquire in war, are hereby in danger of being defaced, and idleness, indolence and a frivolous attention to trifles substituted in their place. From hence, guard-ships in their present indolent state cannot be supposed to contain either officers or seamen truly fit for service, as only those can be deemed such who are employed in cruising and stationed ships.

*NAVY BOARD TO THE SECRETARY
OF THE TREASURY.*

[Draft in Middleton's writing.]

Sir,—Be pleased to communicate to the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty's T[reasury,] that the allowance made to this board by their order of¹ , for managing the transports and victualling business of the army, being to determine and cease in the winding-up of the accounts at the return of the peace, we find our appointment will be reduced greatly below what the demands of our family, the importance of our office, or our unremitting labour and attendance in it require.

We have therefore resolved, with all humility, to address his Majesty by memorial, on the subject, and to request their lordships to promote and favour it, when it shall be laid before the council

¹ Blank in draft.

for that purpose ; and we beg leave to inform their lordships that from the immense addition of business of late years, occasioned as well by the increase of the fleet, as transferred to us from other boards, we should have thought ourselves obliged to have made this application, through the admiralty, several years ago, had we not satisfied ourselves, in the distressing situation of the country, with the treasury allowance, and waited for more favourable times to prefer what we trust they will think to be our just claim.

For our reasons for hoping to have their lordships' countenance in our application, we wish to recall to their remembrance the circumstances of our first taking on us the victualling business of the army. When it was at first proposed to us from the treasury, we hesitated to engage in it on account of the growing business of our own proper department, rendered at that time peculiarly embarrassing by the great number of transports employed under our direction in America, and the declining state of the then comptroller's health, who, from the nature of his office, and the secrecy necessarily connected with the service, must have had the chief management of it. On the appointment of the present comptroller, the business was reviewed by their lordships, and we resolved to accept of the charge, as well from a consciousness of its being more in our power to carry it on with economy and effect to the public, than it could have been done by any others who were not professional men, and could not employ the many checks of an office to restrain the great abuses generally practised in this branch, as from an inclination to fulfil the wishes of their lordships and to prevent the public service from being reduced to the like difficulties in future exigency.

We will not repeat here what we have expressed in our memorial ; but we flatter ourselves, that every good purpose has been ensured to the public by our manner of conducting this intricate and important charge ; and that never was a business of its value and extent so cheaply managed, and so soon in a fair way of being brought to an issue without difficulty or dispute ; nor can we entertain a doubt of the like trust continuing to be occasionally committed to this board, as that place where it can only be conducted with expedition, frugality and ease.

We therefore flatter ourselves, that their lordships will take the merits of the whole into their consideration, and lay our memorial before his Majesty, and procure for us such a permanent allowance, under the head of army victualling, or otherways, in lieu of every possible service that can be carried on by this board as may make our

[Stops abruptly.]

TO THE KING

[*Draft in Middleton's writing.*]

The humble memorial, &c. Sheweth :

That your Majesty's memorialists are, under the Lord High Admiral or the Lords Commissioners for executing his office, entrusted in all things relating to the civil economy and management of your Majesty's navy ; and, under that authority, a most important charge and an extensive power over the public treasure, that can in few cases be checked, have been lodged, and they trust hitherto safely, in their hands.

That by the gradual increase of your Majesty's fleet to the attainment of its present astonishing height, to which it of necessity must be kept up

even in time of peace, they are obliged to devote their whole time to the public service, and give a constant daily attendance, at all hours, to the duties of their office, while the business of no other public board requires half that confinement or labour.

That, it having been judged proper for your Majesty's service to discontinue the board formerly appointed for the management of transports, the whole direction of that business has been committed to your Majesty's memorialists.

That, in the course of the late war, the lords commissioners of your Majesty's treasury found it necessary also to entrust your Majesty's memorialists with the management of the army victualling.

That both these branches constitute a business that cannot possibly be carried on, either with economy to the public or with expedition and effect to your Majesty's service, but by professional men.

That while they continue both in the same hands, great advantages will arise to your Majesty's service, and great saving will be made of the public money, by their being enabled, according to the exigencies of war operations, to transfer ships from one service to another; sometimes to employ them in carrying troops, sometimes stores, or, as found necessary, provisions; advantages of the utmost importance, that must be lost if placed in other or separate hands.

That by this business being in the hands of your Majesty's memorialists, large sums have actually been saved, and the whole has been put in such a clear train, as in future to free it from the many abuses to which it must always be subject when in other than professional hands; and it may be now considered as making a proper and fixed part of the business of their department.

That your Majesty's memorialists, while they were attentive to keep down the public expense, expedite the service, and make the several parts useful to each other in conducting the transports and victualling service of the army, have been also able by the regularity of the supplies and goodness of the provisions, to produce a general satisfaction and confidence in the army.

That the only difficulty encountered by your Majesty's memorialists, in conducting this business, arose from the competition of other boards, which, from their want of knowledge in shipping, suffered, to the great loss of the public and hindrance of your Majesty's service, many impositions, as well in the sale and measurement of the tonnage as in the manner of conducting the ships for the purposes for which they were hired.

That—should a consideration of these reasons for entrusting your Majesty's memorialists with the transport and victualling business, and an attention to the advantages arising from the whole being uniformly conducted, and from whatever regards shipping being entrusted only to professional [men] and a desire to prevent, among the different boards, a competition most injurious to your Majesty's service, ever bring about a resolution to transfer to them, with the approbation of the lords commissioners of the admiralty, the whole business of providing hired ships or transports for every other public board, so as to make it their duty to supply the victualling and ordnance boards in particular with whatever ships may be wanting in their respective departments,—they are, with a view to the advantage of your Majesty's service, ready to undertake it, and manage it with the utmost frugality, and, with the same attention as in the other branches, to make the several parts useful to each other.

That references have been, and continue to be made daily, from other boards, and more particularly from the lords commissioners of your Majesty's treasury, on professional points, that require great deliberation and the utmost care and circumspection in reporting on them.

That without taking into account the future extension of their duty by providing the other boards with shipping, their present employment has thrown into their hands a discretional trust of such magnitude as falls to the share of no other subordinate board in this kingdom ; and from the variety and extensiveness of the contracts made by them, and the various claims and accounts that they have to decide on, has given your Majesty's memorialists an almost uncontrolled power over the public money, while their appointments are inferior to almost every other board, particularly those of the customs and excise, nay to many merchants' clerks.

That at the original institution of this, the annual ordinary expense was no more than £170,000, and the duty of your Majesty's memorialists was confined to the management of that part of the public money, and to two days' attendance in the week, for which a salary of £500 was allotted to each member.

That, except for a few years of the last war that they had an extra allowance for managing, for the treasury, the victualling business of the army, their salaries have continued as at first established, while they have been obliged to give an unremitting daily attendance, have had the management of the transport business fixed in their board, and the navy expenses that have gone through their hands, have of late exceeded £¹ ,000,000.

¹ Blank in draft.

Your Majesty's memorialists do, therefore, in all humility, submit to your royal consideration the propriety of making such an addition to their present appointments as may be more adequate to the increased labour and high trust of their department, than what was established for them, which, by the difference that has happened in the value of money alone, is not more than half its original value, while the importance of this office, and their necessary attendance in their duty has increased beyond all proportion.

And your memorialists shall ever pray.

LORD HOWE TO MIDDLETON

Admiralty. 30th July, 1784.

I have much pleasure in the regard you express, so consonant to my own sentiments, for a due adherence to the regulations of office and decrease of the public expense in the extensive branches of the naval department. I have therefore the greater satisfaction in observing that no infringement of those regulations can be properly inferred, nor inattention to the pressure of the public burden be deduced from the appointments to the common yachts noticed in your favour of the 27th, since it is very indifferent, as to either of those concerns, whether the carpenters had been taken from amongst the few of those who had only served in the lowest classes (if they should prefer a common yacht to their present support in the yards) or from the list of established shipwrights to have supplied the vacancies. And if an undeserving man has been chosen in either instance, I shall have as little scruple in consenting to his removal, as I had to his appointment.

The application of Mr. Record was made for the royal yacht, which is on a higher establishment, though I do not profess to be confined by any special line of ordinary practice in the choice of appointments for that particular situation.

For these reasons I cannot doubt the competent effect of your usual explanations on the reasonable minds of your constituents, who will not have reckoned upon an exclusive pretension to similar gratuities. Truly obliged by the purpose of your intimations,

I am, with much esteem, . . .

SIR JOHN LINDSAY¹ TO
MIDDLETON

[*Holograph.*]

Leghorn. 4th August, 1784.

My dear Sir Charles,—I had the pleasure of receiving your letter on my arrival here, and you may be assured it will give me particular pleasure to be of service to any of your friends ; but in justice, I must provide for the first clerk in my office before Mr. McLean.

I must confess it gave me no pleasure to hear of your being in parliament, though I have no doubt that your conduct there will give satisfaction to your friends, as well as be an advantage to the public ; yet I fear the fatigue of attending it, joined to that of the laborious office you have filled with as great honour to yourself as of real service to the fleet—that the duties of both will be too much for your health.

I cannot boast of my own health ; I have not been one day clear of the gout since the 1st of January,

¹ Commodore in command of the squadron in the Mediterranean, with his broad pennant in the *Trusty*. See *D.N.B.*

and being fixed in my right hand [it] makes writing very troublesome. However, I have this satisfaction—that no part of my public duty has been obstructed by my illness. I have totally lost the use of my feet, and am obliged to be carried about in a chair; though I am visited in every place I go to by the sovereigns and princes of the country, they make no objection to receive me sitting. It is impossible for greater honours and marks of distinction to be paid to a squadron than what we have received everywhere. Having five ships with me at Naples, I carried the king out with me into the bay; and from ten in the morning till dark¹ continued, to his great delight, forming in all different ways that the number would admit of. He expressed much satisfaction at the celerity the ships changed their position, and the exact lines they preserved; he desired me to throw out the signal of approbation. I told him I had no signal to approve of the conduct of my officers, but that I had one to reprove; he answered that an English fleet could never have occasion for the latter. He and his minister, General Acton, are much bent upon forming a marine; they have got a very large quantity of timber, which appears to be good wood; they have already built two line-of-battle ships, and are now laying the keel of another. The king lives almost entirely on the water, and is a very tolerable seaman; a brigantine which he is mostly on board of, he works solely himself, even to the hoisting out of a boat. He has a good understanding and an excellent heart, but his education has been totally neglected.

As far as I have seen of the *Trusty* I like. She sails on a wind better than any of the squadron except the *Thetis*, who has very little the advantage,

¹ 24th June. See Schomberg's *Naval Chronology*, ii., 146-7.

but she does not go at all large ; everything beats us ; she does not carry her ports well, but is the handsomest ship I ever saw.

I must mention to you the badness of the contract rope, which was received principally at Chatham and some at Gibraltar. One of our fore braces has no less than four splices in it. I flatter myself in respect to stores you will find the squadron at as little expense as any that ever were here. The loss of Minorca we very sensibly feel ; as the least that can be allowed for a passage to Gibraltar is six weeks, and as long on the return makes three months ; I therefore have been obliged to order some provisions, as well as stores, to be purchased, but only such as were absolutely necessary, and I believe they were bought on cheaper terms than you can send them out.

The admiralty have ordered me to send the ships home or to Gibraltar when in want of repair. At Gibraltar there is not an artificer of any kind. We got very good caulkers at Villa Franca and very reasonable, but they work slow, and the ships have required a great deal of caulking, either owing to the greenness of the wood, or its having been badly executed. I observe those from the River Medway are the worst, and it appears to me to be much owing to the badness of the oakum. I should apprehend it to be a matter worthy of your consideration ; if it was picked in the yard and from good stuff, it might be depended on, which cannot be the case if you give it out to be done.

The captains plague me much about paint. I believe the establishment is only once a year, but in this hot climate it surely would be a saving, as the expense is but a trifle, to allow it oftener, which I mean to do if I receive no directions to the contrary.

The Trusty's main mast is very bad. I believe

the stick not good, but chiefly owing to its being ill made. I observe there are no cables sent out for the Trusty. Excuse this scrawl for I write in pain; and believe me to be with true regard,

My dear Sir,
most faithfully yours,
JOHN LINDSAY.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

[*Private.*]

Hertford Street. 16th September, 1784.

Sir Charles Middleton begs leave to submit the enclosed paper to Mr. Pitt's consideration. If the abuse reached no further than the ship office, the authority of the navy board would be sufficient to correct it; but ever since the treasury board brought forward the account of fees, the demands have continued to increase. This consequence, Sir Charles foresaw at the time, and pointed it out to Lord Shelburne, representing the necessity of following up the enquiry by regulations that might prevent the abuses likely to follow what the parties concerned would certainly consider as a sanction for publicly demanding what, till that time, had only been managed privately, and seemingly with the good will of those who paid them.

If, according to what is suggested in the enclosed, the fees be regulated, they might be formed into a fund for defraying the expense of the office; and it is submitted whether the fees and perquisites in every other branch of the navy office might not be regulated in like manner, and appropriated in due proportion for the support of clerks and other persons employed.

The commissioners of the navy proposed, under the last administration, something similar to this for

themselves, viz., a commutation of their houses and other emoluments for a certain fixed salary. This Sir Charles recommended in the strongest manner to Lord John Cavendish, as worthy of his and the Duke of Portland's attention, especially before the houses intended to be built at Somerset House for navy and victualling boards were taken in hand. The papers on this subject are to be found in the treasury.

The purchasing of the privilege of chips from the yard artificers was another object brought forward under the last administration.¹ It was recommended by the navy board, on an offer made by the shipwrights of the several yards; and Sir Charles has good reason to believe that the proposal now lies before the council board, approved by the last board of admiralty.

The receipt and sale of stores in the king's yards is an object of great national concern. The officers and clerks who are appointed to receive them are not men of sufficient consequence for so unlimited a trust. Under the name of fees, they receive presents, to the great injury of the public, both in respect of the quality and the quantity of the articles supplied and sold. There can be no effectual remedy for this evil, but appointing men of known integrity as inspectors, with salaries that may raise them above the temptation of a bribe. This appointment would [put a stop to]² many of the evils and abuses at this time existing in the dock yards, and totally abolish the practice of giving and receiving fees between the contractors, officers and clerks.

Poundage on money paid by officers and others employed under the navy board should be taken

¹ See *ante*, pp. 157 sqq.

² Suggested. Words omitted in the MS.

away, and salaries advanced in lieu of it. If the officers' emoluments be in proportion to the public expense, it is obvious how great the temptation must be to extravagance.

The management of the chest of Chatham is a fit object of enquiry for the commissioners of public accounts. It has greatly degenerated from its first institution, and it is become, in some measure, an expensive job. Sir Charles Middleton, having the accounts kept in his office, and being one of the supervisors, will be able to furnish every necessary information. It appears, that in 1693, the affairs of the chest had been examined by a similar commission.

Whenever more material concerns leave Mr. Pitt at leisure to take these subjects into consideration, Sir Charles Middleton will have much pleasure in explaining them and giving every assistance in his power towards remedying them.

MIDDLETON TO HOWE

[*Copy. Autograph.*]

Hertford Street. 16th November, 1784.

My Lord,—As I understand in office that Sir John Williams is to be superannuated, I beg leave to communicate to your lordship the answer which I made to his Majesty, when he condescended, some years past, to ask my opinion on the propriety of having a joint surveyor of the navy.

‘That it appeared to me altogether unnecessary, as two assistants had been added to the original institution; that I thought it in other respects very improper, as it must unavoidably occasion jealousy, difference in opinion, and obstruct the public service’

Three years' longer experience in office has fully confirmed this opinion, and but for the good-natured disposition of Sir John Williams and the attention of Mr. Hunt to his infirmities, I should have been very much puzzled how to have acted under the circumstances of so ill judged an appointment.

If this information can be made useful to your lordship, and prevent a successor being appointed till the service is in want of one, I shall be well pleased ; being &c.

HOWE TO MIDDLETON

Admiralty. 16th November, 1784.

I am obliged to you for your intention to apprise me of what you suppose to be the king's sentiments upon the institution of joint surveyors of the navy. I have had the satisfaction to find that it continues to meet with his Majesty's entire approbation, and I am persuaded that, upon further experience, you will not fail to see it in the same advantageous light.

With respect to the difficulties you seem to apprehend from the possible intemperance of two officers sitting at the board in that character, I trust that the concurrent wisdom of the board will operate effectually to prevent or regulate all such indiscretions, if, what I should so little expect to hear of, either parties should require it.

MIDDLETON TO HOWE

[*Copy. Autograph.*]

17th November, 1784.

My Lord,—Since I had the honour of communicating to your lordship my sentiments on the subject of superannuating Sir John Williams, it has occurred to me that it may be in contemplation to reduce the extra commissioners. In this case allow

me to solicit your lordship's attention to the consequences of the measure before it be carried into execution ; particularly that you would first enquire from Mr. Le Cras and Mr. Wallis concerning the nature, extent and importance of the lines of duty committed to their charge, that you may be enabled to judge whether they can be carried on with effect by those who may be continued in office, or whether the difference between the full pay and pension of these officers be an object to be brought into competition with the advantages of the proper discharge of their duty to the public.

Supposing their dismissal resolved on, I cannot help acknowledging myself particularly interested in the consequences. The pains and labour that I have taken, and indeed continue still to use, to arrange and keep in order the extensive business of the navy office, is not a subject for me to dwell upon ; but having, with much perseverance and application, mastered the principal difficulties, and brought the system to its original purpose, it will be truly mortifying to see it fall again into confusion for want of proper assistance.

That the navy board may hereafter bear reduction, I readily acknowledge, and in my public letter to the former admiralty have pointed out how it might most advantageously take place. But in an office where so much professional skill is continually necessary to be exerted, where there are so many important branches that can be examined and checked to advantage only by seamen, allow me to entreat your lordship, not only for myself, but for the credit of the board where you preside, and the advantage to the public service, that this department may not be deprived of the assistance of the two gentlemen who are now in it, and who have done so much to promote the business of it.

It is entirely out of my power to point out how the lines of duty annexed to their present charge can be executed if they be removed, and I assure myself, your lordship will make the same conclusion if you will condescend to make the enquiry from the returns and books; nay, so strongly am I impressed with the advantage that must continue to be reaped by the public from the continuance of two sea officers besides the comptroller at the navy board, that, could I afford it, I would pay the difference out of my own pocket rather than the service should be deprived of their assistance. Indeed, they should be an established part of the board, as was originally the practice.

In 1688—Sir R. Haddock, comptroller; Sir John Berry, comptroller of victualling accounts; Sir W. Booth, comptroller of storekeeper's accounts.

In 1704—Sir R. Haddock, comptroller; Sir Clowdisley Shovell, victualling accounts; Henry Greenhill, storekeeper's accounts.

And if the resident commissioners were drafted from the same source, they would enter on their office properly instructed in their duty, and be ready to co-operate with the navy board, which under the present arrangement has not always been the case.

Respecting the gentlemen themselves, I am convinced from what I feel myself, that it would be more agreeable to them and more convenient to their families to have 400*l.* per annum, while doing nothing and able to choose their place of abode, than to have their full salaries and be confined to attendance in the office and a town life.

I have been the more full on the subject, because I think it is of the utmost importance for carrying on the business of the navy office with method and economy, and I should have been wanting in my duty if I had been silent till it was too late. In

laying this before your lordship, I feel myself discharged of any uneasy burden, and remain with great respect. . . .

P.S.—I have this moment seen your lordship's letter of information to Mr. Wallis ; but I think the subject so much worthy of your lordship's further consideration, that I still think it necessary to beg that you will examine the branches of duty entrusted to his care, and trust to me when I assure your lordship that men of Mr. Wallis' principles and application are not easily found, and should not be laid aside when they can be made useful to the public. I should have mentioned that the clerks allowed to extra commissioners, being wholly employed in the comptroller's office, are unnecessary to be continued in time of peace, and which will save to the public more than the difference between Mr. Wallis's pension and full pay. The slop office, too, is particularly under that gentleman's care, and has received much benefit from his attention to it. I conclude by assuring your lordship that it is of no moment to me personally how the office is arranged. As long as I find the assistance allowed equal to inspection and execution, I shall do my part. When the public cannot afford this, I shall request his Majesty's acceptance of my resignation.

HOWE TO MIDDLETON

Admiralty. Friday evening,
19th November, 1784.

[*Autograph.*]

Upon an attentive perusal of your letter of the 17th, I perceive we differ in opinion on the propriety of the arrangements which are the subject of it, as I found, on my late inspection of the yards, we

likewise do in several points concerning the service of the ports.

By the arrangements at the navy board, the senior of the two extra nautic commissioners is retained ; but as you intimate a probability that our difference of opinion in the former instance will induce you to quit your situation in the civil line, I will only add that I flatter myself the public will have the benefit of your abilities in the military branch of your profession, in that case, when the king's service may require it.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Hertford Street. 19th November, 1784.

Sir,—Having accidentally heard at the navy office, that Lord Howe had sent a message to Sir John Williams to persuade him to apply for superannuation, I naturally concluded his lordship meant to save the expense of such an appointment, and to have continued assistance in another line where it was really necessary ; and in order to strengthen his lordship's opinion, I wrote the following letter :

Follows, the letter to Lord Howe of the 16th November (*ante*, p. 178).

In answer to this letter, I was informed by his lordship, that a successor to Sir John Williams was approved by his Majesty, and that he had no doubt on further experience I should not fail to see it in the same advantageous light. After this determination, I have no means left to prevent discredit being thrown on the present administrator, but to lay my sentiments before you, and to request your influence to prevail with his lordship to suspend this ill-timed appointment, till he sees, on further

experience, whether it is necessary or not. But to renew such an office in time of profound peace, when the navy is so complete in the number of ships that it would be the height of extravagance to build another for at least ten years to come ; to do this without consulting with the navy board, or even asking the surveyor, who did the whole duty in the late war, whether he required any such assistance—I say without these concurring opinions, what is the public to think of our economy, and on what ground of reasoning can this measure be defended in parliament? For my own part, I should feel culpable in my duty, if I was silent, when a question of this nature came to be investigated, and it would be trespassing on your good sense to use further arguments to convince you of the impropriety of the intended appointment. I beg pardon for taking up so much of your time, and am with much esteem . . .

The king's observation on my remarks concerning a joint surveyor was : ' I was always of that opinion.' Indeed, every one must be of this opinion who knows anything of public boards and public business. It formerly occasioned indecent quarrels between the parties, introduced confusion at the board and delayed the public service. It must necessarily do so again, and can produce no other effect if it takes place. If Lord Howe was as well acquainted with the navy board as I am, he would see the impropriety of this measure, but he is ill advised.

NAVY BOARD TO THE ADMIRALTY

[*Rough draft, in Middleton's writing.*]

In return to their lordships' letter of¹ requiring¹ we are happy in an opportunity of laying before them the whole of our management in these particulars, fully persuaded, that we shall not only have their approbation of our conduct, but their concurrence and authority for carrying into execution the many regulations and amendments which the present state of his Majesty's fleet of necessity requires, and which the experience of a most expensive war has enabled us to suggest.

At the beginning of the late war, the utmost difficulty was found in procuring stores for the use of the fleet; and, after every possible exertion on our parts, the supplies continued, to the last, very unequal to the demands of the service. The circumstances could not be concealed from the public eye; and those who contracted for a supply, finding many competitors in the foreign markets amongst the powers at war, were obliged to raise the prices to a most enormous height, while the usual mode of payment by navy bills, in consequence of such increasing demands, sunk the public credit so low, as to oblige us, at last, to make bargains at the ruinous discount of 22 per cent. These disadvantages, added to the insufficiency of the fleet, in the course of our extensive contracts, amounted to some millions against the public. In short, it is impossible to represent fully the difficulties we felt, and the impositions to which we

¹ Blanks in draft. The letter would seem to have reference to the lords' visitation of the dockyards—of Portsmouth on 13th September, 1784; the others, later—which, as will be seen afterwards, rankled excessively in Middleton's mind.

were obliged to submit, till, by extraordinary exertions and great expense of the public treasure, we had in some degree overcome the obstacles that the circumstances of the time had raised against the public service.

On the return of peace, with all our late difficulties before us, our first step was to consider what had formerly been done, and how far the establishment of eight months' stores, to be set apart for ships in good condition, had been complied with. We found, on our enquiry, no two yards agreeing in the same practice ; that the order, being general, little attention had been paid to the execution of it ; that where it had been most attended to, a very small provision had been made against the contingency of a war, and less method used in the disposal of the articles. On a consideration of the general state of stores, we found in most of the yards, an over abundance of articles no longer in use, and a total want of others that were in present demand ; that from an irregularity in the demands, articles were heaped up in one place without consideration, and altogether wanting in another where they were equally necessary. The consequence of this practice has been a large and unnecessary establishment of transports, much expense, and a great waste of time and labour in carrying on the works of the yards. In short, though the principles on which the business of this branch of the service has been managed are so good that experience can scarcely add anything to them, yet the leaving the officers too much to the one construction of general orders, and not requiring stated returns, with many other particular circumstances, have made it necessary to review the whole, and adapt them to the present practice and state of the fleet.

As the principal cause of our distress and great expense proceeded from an ill-judged economy in not keeping up a sufficient stock of unperishable stores during the peace, for the ships in ordinary, and in setting apart for those in good condition such articles as could be safely kept in store and shifted occasionally by issuing them to the ships in commission, our first attention was naturally directed to that object ; and as the large quantity of stores remaining on hand and to be delivered in the yards would enable us to complete, without any new expense to government, we lost no time in forming an arrangement for that purpose ; and as the state of new storehouses at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham admitted of proper conveniences for such parts of the fleet as were laid up at these ports, we embraced that opportunity for carrying it into execution.

At Deptford and Woolwich, where we have been obliged to provide for at least four times the number of frigates that were ever laid up before at these ports, we found the storehouses very inadequate to this purpose. Where the old ones were found capable of improvement, they have been made convenient ; and such as have been rebuilding have been ordered to be completed with a view to this service. The quantity of stores we had has enabled us to furnish the berth of ships in good condition, and to supply the present demands of the fleet without new expense to the public ; and we flatter ourselves they are now arranged so as, when furnished, to be equal to the wants of the fleet and the reception of our remaining contracts ; and should the peace continue but a few years longer, we trust that, by the preparation now making, things will be put in such a state as greatly to diminish the ordinary suspense, and

make the whole go on with the utmost ease and dispatch.

Our demands, by these means, on the breaking out of any future war, will be so few, and so gradual, that we must have the choice and rate of the market always in our power; and by the present mode of appropriating the stores, ships in good condition will be fit for any service on the shortest notice, and with very little additional expense.

The necessity for framing orders to meet the changing circumstances of the service, to enforce former warrants and to check criminal neglect and abuses, has multiplied our warrants to the yard officers to an incredible degree.

This has been attended with considerable confusion; and serves, in some degree, as an excuse for the officers in not being more punctual in the execution of them. During the pressing calls of the war, we were obliged to submit to these inconveniences, and content ourselves with the correction of particular abuses as they were discovered; but sensible of the difficulty under which the officers laboured in conducting themselves, we applied ourselves, on the first return of the peace, and have employed every leisure moment since, to review the whole standing and occasional orders, to make them consistent with each other, and agreeable to the present practice. This work is now far advanced, and, under the correction of particular members of the board, it is so arranged as to prevent orders in future from returning to their former state of confusion, and will be laid before their lordships, for their approbation, as soon as it is fully completed.

We hope this state of the case will account to their lordships for any irregularity that may have appeared in the late visitation; and we flatter

ourselves, that the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th articles of the standing orders of the board, the general practice of its management, and the many admiralty orders which have been given from time to time, have been a sufficient authority for what has been done.

MIDDLETON TO HOWE

[*Copy. Autograph.*]

Hertford Street. 22nd November, 1784.

My Lord,—It was my intention to have troubled your lordship once more on the subject of the navy board's establishments, as judging that the experience of one who had no views but the public benefit in a subject intricate in itself, and not easy to be understood by persons not immediately concerned with it, must be well received, where economy of expense and proper management of the office were the purposes to be answered. But as I find from the manner in which business is carried on, as well as the correspondence that has passed between us in things that concerned the public service, that my opinion carries no weight, I shall henceforward give up the attempt.

I have, my lord, no dependents to bring forward, no private ambition to indulge; those men have had my wishes, who could best serve their country; those measures my approbation, that had the public good in view. Allow me only to observe that as a proper degree of confidence placed in a person entrusted with the conduct of a most important department will give a favourable interpretation to even doubtful actions, so where there is a desire to find exceptions, the best conduct cannot expect to escape censure.

HOWE TO MIDDLETON

[Holograph.]

Admiralty. 23rd November, 1784.

Sir,—If a perfect concurrence of sentiment, or acquiescence in the opinions you have favoured me with in your late correspondence, is the only testimony you can receive of a due attention being shown to them, and a just sense being had of your liberal motives in those communications, I must confess I cannot yet hope to remove the impressions which I understand, from the tenor of your letter of the 22nd, you have conceived of my determination to take exception at every proposition you should offer for the public service.

Deeming such persuasion highly injurious to the conduct I profess, I must beg leave to assure you that it is ill-founded, as I am, Sir,

Your sincere, humble servant,

HOWE.

Middleton's Minute

No answer necessary.

PITT TO MIDDLETON

[Holograph.]

Downing Street. 26th November, 1784.

Sir,—I am very sorry not to have had it in my power to answer sooner the favour of your letter, informing me of what had passed relative to the appointment of a joint surveyor of the navy to succeed Sir John Williams. I can have no doubt of the zeal for the public service by which you are guided; but from what I feel due to Lord Howe's situation, as well as from the personal confidence to which he is entitled, I cannot interfere in the

manner you wish. His lordship will, I am persuaded, be ready to adopt any measure which he considers as practicable for the diminution of expense. I am happy in reflecting how desirous you have been to contribute to the same necessary object, and I need not assure you how much I have it at heart, that it should be effectually attended to in every department.

MIDDLETON TO HOWE

[Copy. Autograph.]

Hertford Street. 9th May, 1785.

My Lord,—Having engaged myself during the marine administration of the Earl of Sandwich to undertake the inspection and revisal of the regulations and orders for the government of the civil branch of the navy as soon as peace was established, and having his Majesty's permission at that time to present him with a view of the plan when reduced into any degree of order, I think it incumbent on me, to acquaint your lordship that it is finished on my part, and I have presented his Majesty with an outline of it accordingly. When the whole has been examined and corrected by the navy board, it will be submitted to the admiralty for their approbation, and I flatter myself it is so contrived as to prevent disorder in future, and will render the officers' duty so distinct as to remove any difficulty on their part in the execution of it. I could have wished indeed, this work to have been completed and in force previous to any general visitation of the yards, because neither order in the arrangements nor obedience to establishment can be expected where the law is not clearly stated and understood. The warrants at present, from alteration of circumstances and length of time, are become

so numerous and contradictory, as to require continual explanation and amendment.

If your lordship wishes to see this collection, before it can be corrected for the admiralty, I shall be glad to explain it at any leisure opportunity, and am with great respect . . .

HOWE TO MIDDLETON

Admiralty. 12 May, 1785.

As I understand from your letter of yesterday's date, that you have yet only had leisure to arrange the materials for the digest ordered in 1767, and that the plan still remains to be finally adjusted at the board, I think I need not trouble you for any explanations upon it before it has undergone that finishing revision, and has been officially referred for our consideration here.

The particulars you have favoured me with from Mr. Pierson call upon us not to relax in our attention to be timely supplied in every branch of our marine department, and of course to the preservation of the stores we already possess. I find equal regard is necessary to the state of the masts at Plymouth as at Chatham; and that no time should be lost in the use of every possible means for preventing the devastation of the worm, at the former as well as latter port.

MIDDLETON TO HOWE

[Copy. Autograph.]

13th May, 1785.

My Lord,—We are at this time making every necessary enquiry concerning the masts at Plymouth, but I am the less apprehensive myself on this subject, as the stock we have in hand is very large,

ORGANIZATION OF DOCKYARDS 193

and I do not remember more than two or three masts that have been cast on account of the worm since I have been in office. If another mode of preserving masts can be adopted at those ports where the worm bite, it will merit consideration; but if none such can be found, the examination must be frequent, and those nearest the mud brought first into use. It may be proper, too, to take in hand the intended pond at Woolwich without delay. A thought has struck me of burying our store masts at Chatham and Plymouth, as practised at Lisbon; but how far this will be found practicable is the subject of present enquiry. Portsmouth appears to be free from this insect in the ponds; and though the sticks that lay in the water at that port are numerous, yet I trust the pond now in hand, with what is already finished, will be found sufficient for a three years' consumption at that port.

I can only add, that my constant attention is kept up to every part of the duty of the office I am in; and though not responsible singly, yet I must certainly consider myself in a very great degree so while I have the charge of conducting the business belonging to it.

HOWE TO MIDDLETON

Admiralty. 27th September, 1785.

After your explanation of the matter last week I had no thoughts of saying more to you on the subject of the bricklayers' pound at Chatham. Until the receipt of your subsequent letter, I imagined that new work had been ordered while you were upon your visitation—the object of which appointment was for the deputed commissioners to prepare materials for the consideration of the board

at large, so that each member might have opportunity to show, in what degree any proposed alteration of the establishment might affect his particular branch. I did not suppose much difficulty would be found in having the expenses regulated by the estimates, conformable to the letter of the standing instructions, in such articles at least as are reducible to any stated amount ; but having at length succeeded to your satisfaction in impressing that obvious duty on the minds of the yard officers, I trust the habit will now become permanently established.

The attention of the admiralty will certainly be given to enforce the observance of it, and we shall not overlook the state of the buildings meant to be replaced by suitable provision made in the next year's estimates, which I shall be glad to have brought forward for inspection as early as possible.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Hertford Street. 12th December, 1785.

Sir Charles Middleton, at the desire of Mr. Rose has sent for Mr. Pitt's private perusal a copy of the minutes of a visitation made by himself, the surveyor and clerk of the acts this last summer, by which he will see the present state of the ordinary and dock-yards, with the observations that occurred in the course of the visit.

From this view Mr. Pitt will observe, that the progress in bringing forward the fleet since the peace, and making provision for it against a future war has been very great, and that there is good reason to believe that, by the end of 1786, there will be upwards of ninety sail of the line, including the present guard ships, fit for service, and as many frigates of twenty

guns and upwards, exclusive of those now in commission. This is more than double the number of ships that were in good condition at the beginning of the last war. The provision of stores is equal to twelve months' war consumption, and in such foreign articles as are not subject to decay, more than two years. With this preparation, and which with proper management may be easily kept up, by the usual allowance of ordinary, and wear and tear, there will be little reason to fear the combined naval force of the House of Bourbon; but it must be carefully attended to; and what is already done not suffered to go back by wasting our labour and timbers on new ships, while so many old ones are in want of repair. Care also must be taken that no greater proportion of new ships be laid down than can be properly disposed of in our ports and on our slips, nor that will take us off from the repairs that, in the best state of things, must be necessary to keep up so large a number of serviceable ships, and bring forward such others as have not yet come under repair. This arrangement is the more requisite because there is a real necessity of allowing time for recruiting our store of oak timber, not only in the dockyards, but in the country at large, where from the immense expense of it during the late war in the king's and merchant yards, there is a very great deficiency, and which can only be recruited by suspending our building.

By this proposed suspension in the present increased state of serviceable ships, it is not meant that we should be found unprepared when circumstances call for an extraordinary exertion. The timber may be gradually collected in our yards, and by the late manner of assorting it, will be ready seasoned when building becomes necessary. In the meantime, by confining ourselves to repairs, our immediate

expense of timber will be much lessened, and by applying our common strength to this object, we shall be able to produce a much larger number of serviceable ships in the same period, while the growing timber will have leisure to come on. In short, I would propose no more new ships at any yard after the present ones are completed, while there remains a sufficient number of old ones to employ our shipwrights.

In perusing the minutes of the visitation, there will appear a number of buildings proposed to be erected and repaired to complete the establishment of each yard, and which, by the allowance of a proper annual sum, may be all finished in the course of five or six years at most. Every principle of economy and foresight will show the propriety of not leaving any part of this business to the chance of a future war, and when once finished, the expense also may be considered to be at an end.

There is another necessary piece of economy, which must strike every person who gives his thoughts to the subject; the commissioning in time of peace, as far as wanted, the oldest serviceable ships in preference to new ones, and keeping them in commission till they are in want of repair and there is leisure to take them in hand. By this management we shall avoid the unnecessary expense which is incurred in fitting out ships from the ordinary, and the wear of the newest serviceable ships will be spared till a time of real service. By a contrary mode, there is a great waste of stores in fitting out such a variety of ships, a considerable addition is made to the number in want of repair, and, if this practice is pursued, a rupture must find us with a much smaller number fit for service.

A practice has lately taken place of relieving the distant garrisons by transports and which in the

present year will cost near £20,000. There is an apparent saving in the difference of expense between a guardship at anchor and at sea, and which may probably have been the inducement; but when we consider the necessity of bringing into use the appropriated stores laid apart for ships in good condition, the advantages of training to service both officers and men in time of peace, and that a few ships are sufficient for the business of transporting troops, it will be found to be but short-sighted policy. Sir C. M. will not trouble Mr. Pitt with any further detail at present, as the report of the visitation will give him a general idea of what is deficient, and he trusts the commissioners of accounts will find themselves sufficiently authorised to correct what is otherways amiss in the office branch, and particularly to amend the present manner of carrying on the business at the navy board, where accounts, contracts, correspondence, and orders are too much intermixed for the purposes of economy, correctness, and dispatch and secrecy.

[*Rough draft.*]

31st December, 1785.

Sir Charles Middleton presents his respects to Mr. Pitt, and in consequence of the conversation that passed last night, he takes the liberty of transmitting for his consideration, such queries as may lead to answers which appear to him to be most likely to furnish Mr. Pitt with the information he required for the purposes of economy and policy in naval matters.

Sir Charles is happy in the persuasion that Mr. Pitt is impressed with a strong idea of the advantages that may be derived from the present advanced state of the fleet, which now offers an opportunity, if prosecuted with vigour, to maintain its superiority over the other powers of Europe,

and of the expediency of the enquiry now on foot for forming a proper system for the better regulation of expenses and giving more energy to the civil and military branches of the navy in future.

If, in the elucidation of this subject, Mr. Pitt is of opinion that going back to the management of both during the last war will direct the enquiry more immediately to the proper objects of regulation, Sir C. M. will be happy in answering any questions he may state for that purpose.

MR. PITT'S QUERIES¹

[*Copy, in Ramsay's writing.*]

I

Q. How many ships of war will it be proper to keep in complete condition for beginning a war to the most advantage?

A. The number cannot be too great. One ship in the beginning of a war is worth two in the latter part of it, and therefore every possible exertion should be made to fit out and keep ready as many as can, by any and every effort, be manned at the first onset. But in order that there may be a general system formed for providing for the expenses of the fleet, I would propose to have not fewer than 80 sail kept afloat in good condition, and as many finished, ready for launching, on the slips, as they can contain. These will amount to about 15 or 16 more. These last should be of the largest classes practicable. The usual proportion of timber in the several yards may be so converted and

¹ It is only a suggestion, but is perhaps not impossible that these queries are those mentioned in Middleton's letter of 31st December (preceding). If so, Middleton was, in fact, answering his own questions.

prepared for building, as to gain a considerable space of time in setting up new ships in the room of those that may be launched. Besides these, there should be kept ready 10 of 50 guns, and 100 frigates. True economy is to do and provide everything that is practicable during peace, while money is cheap, and we have leisure to attend to it. Nothing should be left to war but what properly belongs to it. To get into good condition as many ships as possible in the present interval will save millions in a future war, and will give advantages of which none can judge, who had not the delays, the difficulties and expense of a contrary system to struggle with in the last.

II

Q. What proportion of stores will it be proper to set apart for these ships, taking into consideration the necessity of present economy and a regard to future dispatch?

A. Every article of the unperishable kind should be provided with all discreet expedition for every ship that is or may be made serviceable. But of sails, cables, and other perishable stores, sufficient for 30 sail of the line and 40 or 50 frigates. The proportion of hemp and canvas usually kept in store will be sufficient to go on without any sudden rupture.

III

Q. What number of shipwrights will it be necessary to retain at each yard for keeping the above ships in complete order, and attending to the other purposes of the several yards?

A. Were no more new ships ordered to be laid down till a new war should make it necessary, and were those now building suffered to remain in a

finished state on the stocks, I am of opinion that by the end of 1787, or, at farthest 1788, the following numbers will be found sufficient for every purpose. Deptford, Shipwrights 350, Caulkers 45; Woolwich, S. 300, C. 45; Chatham, S. 600, C. 110; Sheerness, S. 120, C. 30; Portsmouth, S. 700, C. 120; Plymouth S. 600, C. 110. I will go farther. If the number of ships mentioned in the first article, or any other established number of ships be completed, and brought at once into good condition, these numbers will be found equal to every war demand; nay, may be suffered to fall gradually 200 men below these; a consequence of the plan adopted since the peace of filling up vacancies only by apprentices, which brings on a succession of stout able men equal to any exertion. Yet the numbers fixed above are below those employed in 1754, which was the lowest of any these last 30 years, and 900 men fewer than were retained during the war of 1756.

IV

Q. What are the best means for keeping up any proposed number of ships?

A. To carry on the present works with vigour, and to permit the artificers to continue to work as at present till the end of year 1787. By this time the present complement of shipwrights and other artificers will be considerably diminished, under the regulations now established in the several yards, it being intended to keep the supplies, by apprentices, within the number proposed for the permanent establishment. Thus we shall gradually come to the number proposed, and reduce our expense to the standard of the last peace; and by coming insensibly to it, we shall be able to fix on the proper point of reduction. In this way a reduction can produce

no dissatisfaction; it will be attended with no hardship to individuals, nor any hazard to the public. If gone about suddenly, it would raise a general clamour, occasion much private distress, and injure the public security by drawing artificers out of the kingdom.

V

Q. How many additional ships will be annually wanted to keep up the above numbers, if established, under the usual casualties of war? Or should it be necessary to increase the establishment to 120 sail of the line, and frigates in proportion to the general demands of the service?

A. By bringing this number of ships into complete order, the artificers will be at liberty for the first and second year of the war, to bring forward, for a reserve or for immediate service, such ships as, though not reckoned good enough to be completely repaired in time of peace, may yet answer for home summer service or any sudden emergency. And as these will be chiefly found at Portsmouth and Plymouth, the eastern yards may be employed in setting up new ones in room of those launched. As they will begin with prepared or converted timber, the dispatch may be considerable, and by beginning at once to convert more timber in room of what is daily worked up they will be ready to proceed with another set as soon as these are off the stocks. The execution will only require method to prepare, and foresight to provide the proper materials. On the whole, at least 8 ships in addition may be depended on the first year, as many the second, six new ones the third, three the fourth; which will enable us to keep 120 sail of the line in constant service.

VI

Q. How many new ships can be annually expected from the king's yards? And how many from the merchant yards?

A. By keeping the slips full of finished ships, which is a measure become absolutely necessary from the increased state of the fleet and a real want of secure mooring grounds in our several ports, even if its great economy in saving the ordinary establishment of such a number did not also particularly recommend it, it will be some time before any new ships can be expected from the king's yards. But by beginning with seasoned prepared timber, and keeping up the stock thereof, so as to be able to go on with a ship when once laid down, at least 4 or 5 may be expected every year after the second or third. The merchant yards may be depended on for 4 or 5 line-of-battle ships annually, after they begin to come round, and a sufficient supply of frigates, which may be run up in 18 or 20 months.

VII

Q. What is proposed to be done with ships not thought worthy of being put in a complete state of repair? And how many ships of the line or frigates of this kind may it be necessary to keep lying by as a reserve to fill up the accidents of war, or fit up for any sudden emergency, and employ artificers at intervals during war, so as to bring the greatest number of ships forward in the same time?

A. I should be sorry to see any more line-of-battle ships sold which can be pronounced capable of being brought into service, as the surplus now on hand cannot be deemed more than is sufficient

reserve for possible deficiencies, and keeping the artificers usefully employed. If in the last war, we had had 20 more ships of the line, than we could then find, in a worse condition than the worst ships at this time in the navy, we should have been thankful for them, and have fitted them out at all hazards. Many ships that helped to compose our fleet, not only at home, but abroad, in the two last years of the war were of this kind and did their duty exceedingly well. Indeed, but for such a resource, we must have sunk under our enemies. They form an excellent reserve for a small expense which we ought on no account to put out of our power. All that is necessary for the purpose is to keep them weather-tight by caulking them annually and giving them triennial trimmings. The frigates that are in the worst states, may be indeed sold, because the merchant yards are a sufficient resource for this class of ships.

It might be a matter of deliberation whether, in the present increased number of E. India ships, the directors might not be dealt with for fitting all their new ships to carry, on any emergency, 50 guns or even 60 guns. This would be an incredible resource, particularly in the case of a Dutch war or in the case of any sudden rupture in the East Indies, where they might be easily converted into men of war, and manned from the company's troops.

VIII

Q. How many ships and frigates could probably be manned in the first and second year of a war, supposing 12,000 men kept actively employed in time of peace?

A. Before this question be answered, it must be premised that it ought not to be considered as

connected with or having any influence on the number of ships to be kept in good condition. An unexpected disaster in war may rouse the spirit of the nation ; but how is it to be exerted if there be not ships to put in force ? In short, the questions are totally independent of each other. The reason for keeping up so many serviceable ships is that government may be enabled, by means of a great and sudden exertion, to crush the enemy before he has time to prepare for war ; and this cannot possibly be done but by being beforehand, not only with our preparations, but the execution of them. We have generally suffered by the slowness of our proceedings. If this proved to be the case when naval affairs were much less than at present the object of our rivals' attention, what may be expected when their chief views are bent this way ?

The maintaining of that superiority which a vigorous outset will give us, will depend on a regular and sufficient succession of serviceable ships, which being originally the work of years, can be provided for only by having a large number ready at the commencement of a war. By beginning the last war with a small number of serviceable ships, the shipwrights were kept constantly, during the whole course of it, behindhand, and never could get forward with new ships or capital repairs. The merchant yards, in the latter part of the war, were indeed of the utmost service for increasing the number of ships ; but from the very nature of things, could give no assistance in the beginning ; and the advanced price of every article in time of war alone would stamp the measure with indiscretion. The maxim cannot be too often, or too forcibly impressed, that to put the fleet and keep it up, in peace, in the most perfect state possible, both respecting numbers and their serviceable condition, and quantity of

stores, will be found in the end to be the best economy and the most sound policy. I enforce this from correct observation and indignant experience, and therefore I hope and trust it will be carefully attended to, as nothing but disgrace and loss, in the present situation of naval affairs in Europe, can follow a deficiency in this part of the service, on which every exertion must depend, and which no after care, or second thoughts can possibly remedy.

Having premised this, I shall observe that the procuring of men to man these ships must depend entirely on the energy of government [in taking care], that arrangements [be] made by the admiralty board previous to any armament ; and I would add, on parliamentary regulations adapted to the new situation in which we find ourselves placed. Hitherto we have had no system for manning our fleet but that discouraging, most lavish and expensive method of impressing seamen. Yet such has been the spirit of our people that I have known 17,000 men raised the first year of a war and 20,000 the second. In another rupture only 11,000 have been raised in a year. But in 1778, there were 20,000 raised ; in 1779, 17,000 ; in 1780, 11,000. Here then, in two wars, are 37,000 men raised in the first two years, which, with a peace establishment of 12,000, is sufficient for fifty sail of the line, and thirty-five frigates.

But suppose, by adopting some system, or intermixing a certain proportion of landmen to be raised parochially or otherwise, we could command the first year 30,000, and 20,000 the second, we shall then have the first year fifty sail of the line, and twenty more the second, with a proportion of frigates. If we add to this any general encouragement, and important improvement in our fisheries,

which is become absolutely necessary for us to keep pace with the growing state of the French sugar colonies as a nursery for seamen, I am confident this degree of exertion will be found easy and practicable under a popular spirited administration.

While I thus press home, in the most earnest manner, and in the most pointed language, a state of preparation for war, I am clearly of opinion that no war ever has been, and for the future, is still less likely to be, able to pay for its expenses. I would, therefore, take the best measures possible for carrying it on in the least expensive mode, and securing success; but I would rather wish to make a parade of my regulations and preparations, that they might, without an actual exertion, secure a state of peace. To arrange by statute the parochial supplies of landsmen and the proportion of seamen from the sea ports, is a measure that should be set about with deliberation but speedily; and the numbers should be set high to make the appearance the better. There is one circumstance that should particularly recommend to parliament an attention to the fisheries; that they can be suspended with the least possible damage to the public, during war.

IX

Q. What number of the line and frigates would have been necessary for carrying on the service to advantage, or offensively, at the most critical part of last war, if they could have been procured?

A. The years 1780, 1781, 1782, was a very critical period in the last war. In the two first of these years the line-of-battle ships in actual service got up as high as 99, and the post frigates to 120; of small craft there were 160. Towards 1782 they fell off to 90 of the line, but by spirited exertions, and

fitting up whatever could swim, we got up in the course of the year to 108 of the line ; and we could have manned 10 more if we had had the ships, by paying off a superfluous number of small craft, which, without being of the least use, only swelled the list so as to make the number actually in commission in January 1783 amount to 430 sail. By my observation, 120 sail of the line and 200 frigates exceeded the greatest force of the enemy during the last war ; and the number of men, which we had in actual pay were sufficient to man them. I think it more than probable, that, taking the several chances into account, both for and against us, that this force would preserve our superiority in any future war ; and I am confident that, by a proper exertion of the national force and spirit, and by a proper choice of men and an active ministry, it may be brought to this pitch in the course of the second year of the war. But this cannot be proposed except the ships be in a condition ready for being employed.

X

Q. What improvements are necessary for the better conducting the business of the yards, so as to gain the purposes of economy and despatch ?

A. The first step must be a total new arrangement of the navy board. Instead of the parade of nine commissioners (of which seldom more than three can be usefully employed), sitting at one table to obstruct business, they must be broken into committees for the more correct examination of contracts and accounts, and giving despatch to the variety of matters before the board. The present mode of conducting business in the yards is very ill calculated for economy, and will require very considerable alterations. During the last war, I

accustomed myself to note down every defect as I discovered it ; with the hopes that I should have been enabled to have remedied them as soon as the return of peace should have given leisure and opportunity for introducing improvements.

During the war the great lines of the navy board department were discussed between the first lord of the admiralty and the comptroller ; the business was then laid before the navy board, that any impropriety or inattention might be corrected ; and when approved was brought into official form, and orders were issued accordingly. The effects of this mode were secrecy, decision, and despatch—which was particularly observed and acknowledged by his Majesty's ministers—in the transport service ; and there was no room left for discontent or contradiction. But since the forming of the present board of admiralty, I can hardly say I have been once with the first lord on business ; nor, though some information might have been expected from one who has been so long in office with some credit to himself and advantage to his country, has one question been asked that had the good or advancement of the service in view. There has been, therefore, no opportunity of communicating improvements, and no encouragement to carry any into execution. The only hope is that the commission of enquiry will open a door for reformation.

TO THE KING

[*Copy, in Ramsay's writing.*]

To his most excellent Majesty, the memorial of Sir C. M., Bart., comptroller of his Majesty's navy, most humbly sheweth : That your Majesty's memorialist was appointed comptroller of your Majesty's navy in the month of July, 1778. That,

coming into office at the beginning of a war, and succeeding a man ¹ who had been long in a state of bad health, unable to struggle with the contentious domineering spirit of certain members of the board, who had always opposed themselves to him who held his office, and never would suffer a measure to be resolved on without a debate, he found the office in confusion, the yard artificers under no government, their wharfs, docks and buildings in decay, the store houses either empty of necessary articles or overwhelmed with such as were perishable and unnecessary. That, seeing at once what he had to struggle with, he was convinced that the utmost possible exertion was wanted to oppose the difficulties with which the execution of his duty was surrounded. His application to business, and the integrity of his intentions procured from the several admiralty boards preceding the present, a ready acquiescence in the measures he proposed for the public service. The multiplicity of business continually before the board, that would not admit of delay, obliged him to cut contention short by bringing everything at once to the vote, and thus over-ruling those who were better at forming objections than helping forward the public business. In this he had the generous support of the extra commissioners, the surveyors and clerks of the acts, to whom, and to Mr. Thomas, assistant to the clerk of the acts, he should do injustice, if he embraced not this opportunity of representing to your Majesty their faithful service, and the ready manner in which they fell in with, and promoted in their departments every useful measure.

But in a business, whose purpose was economy, method and despatch, it became necessary that the whole should be conducted by one fixed plan, and this drew on your memorialist the trouble of

¹ Maurice Suckling, Nelson's uncle.

arranging, and drawing up almost every paper, and every new regulation. The preparation of business for the discussion and approbation of the board so entirely took up his time out of office hours, as left him no leisure to attend to his private affairs, or the preservation of his health, much less for any purposes of relaxation. Indeed so much appeared wanting when your memorialist came into place, and so much has actually been accomplished, as could not have been done without the most persevering application and the most decisive conduct. Of this your Majesty has been made acquainted by your ministers in terms very flattering to your memorialist; for the circumstances of the war had occasioned him to have so much intercourse with them, as fully enabled them to judge of the difficulties he had to encounter, and of the manner in which he conducted the public business.

And that your Majesty may form your own opinion, the annexed report, in which nothing has been exaggerated or misrepresented, is humbly submitted to your royal consideration. A sincere attachment to your Majesty's person and family, a desire to be useful to his country in a perilous situation, and an honest ambition of receiving your Majesty's and the country's approbation alone could have carried him through the opposition and fatigue attending the accomplishment of it.

Your memorialist has now got within sight of the goal. Every branch within the department of the navy office has been arranged, and put into such a train, as probably in a year more would be brought into perfect order. The expenses of this plan are already incurred; the benefit arising from it would then have appeared. At present the number of ships lately laid up at the several ports, and the stores delivering in from contractors make an

appearance of confusion, which is still increased by the very preparation for putting things in order. Then everything would have been in its place, the magazines would have been complete, and furnished with every necessary article of store, your Majesty's fleet would have been in a state fit for service, and such a formidable force, ready to put to sea, as must have preserved the nation in peace, or crushed your Majesty's enemies before they could have made head against it.

In this state of preparation for war, your memorialist would have solicited your Majesty, as the greatest favour, to have visited your dockyards, to view, under Providence, the security of your kingdoms, and give spirits and encouragement to your faithful servants there who had laboured to bring things into this state. Then your memorialist's ambition being fully indulged, he would have requested your Majesty's acceptance of his resignation, that he might return to his family and from there to pray for your Majesty's happiness and that public prosperity, to which he could no more actively contribute.

But since the appointment of the present admiralty board, that, or a similar opposition, with which he had originally to contend, has had influence enough entirely to cut off your memorialist's communication with the first lord, which he had till then found so useful and necessary for carrying on the public service; to check the navy board in the execution of its proper duty, object to regulations, apparently because originating with it, resolve on measures that respect it, without information, and pass censures on it, without enquiry. New and inexperienced in business themselves,¹ that board

¹ Of the two naval members of the board, Lord Howe had had but little experience, and Captain the Hon. J. L. Gower had

seems displeased with those who have given their whole time to it. Without once enquiring what arrangements were making at the navy board to bring the yards into order at the end of an extensive war, they resolve on visiting the yards, ignorant and uninformed of everything respecting them. The first lord has not had an hour's conversation with your memorialist since he came into office.

But so little disposed is the present first lord to place any confidence in him, that though visited by him on business the very day before he went down to the yards, he never once communicated his intention to him. In this journey, mistaking for neglect and confusion the preparations making for order and method, and prying into the minutiae of things, when the grand objects of economy and order were unheeded, appearances were censured, that, had they consulted the navy board or waited but one year more before they had made their visit, would have turned out part of a plan that had economy, method, despatch and public security for its object. As well might a banqueting room be expected to be left in perfect order at the end of a large feast, as the dockyards arranged in method at the end of an intricate war. Yet this has been required, and not being found, the fact must be sufficient to cancel the labours and merit of many years.

In this state of things, though, while he continues responsible for the execution of his important office, he is determined to continue his exertions to keep things in order, bring forward the public business, and complete the present arrangement, leaving others answerable for their opposition

none ; and of the civil members, one was 21 in 1783, another was 24, and a third was 27 ; the other two may have been older, but they are unknown to history.

to the public service, yet in all humility, your memorialist submits it to your Majesty's wisdom to determine, as shall be judged best for your Majesty's service, how far it may be proper for him, after the estimates and business of the ensuing year are arranged, to resign a burden which, while he had the confidence and support of the admiralty, he felt himself hardly equal to, but which under its marked disapprobation, and opposition of opinion in matters of the utmost importance, is become peculiarly irksome and disagreeable.

In thus throwing himself at your Majesty's feet, and leaving it to your royal wisdom to determine respecting him, he means not to signify any discontent, nor to express any private disappointment. He accepted of your Majesty's nomination at first, without any selfish views; he now holds himself ready to resign his office at your Majesty's pleasure, carrying into private life that same attachment to your royal person and family, and the same anxiety for the public welfare, which first prevailed on him to quit a retreat which contained all that was personally dear and valuable to him. Resigned to that good Providence, which builds up and pulls down, and none can hinder, he, in all humility, requests your Majesty's gracious acceptance of his past services, and condescension to decide in the present case as shall be judged best. And your memorialist shall ever pray.

MIDDLETON TO (?) PITT.

[*Fair copy.*¹ *Autograph.*]

[*Not dated.*]

Sir,—Enclosed, I use the freedom of sending you a copy of a letter which will accompany the

¹ The neatness and finish of the copy suggest that this is the actual letter and never sent. It is without date, address or endorse-

navy estimates, and I must request the favour of your attention to it, that the sum total may not be lessened. Much labour and time have been employed to give them every possible degree of precision, and to confine them within the strictest rules of economy ; in some articles they are much below what, in my judgment, I can, with an eye to future security, safely approve of. In a business of this extensive nature, the most accurate estimates must generally fall short of the expense, which proves the necessity of adding [to], rather than subtracting from, the sums required. Should they prove more than sufficient, the money will be found in the exchequer at the end of the year, but if they fall short we have no means of accommodating ourselves to the event, but by stopping our works or discharging a part of our artificers—consequences of a very serious nature in this department. Whoever, therefore, advises the pruning of estimates in a business so entirely professional, must speak at random and without judgment.

But this is not the only evil attending it. The officers of the dockyards, whose duty it is to supply information in composing the estimates, finding a custom to prevail of curtailing them, and no attention paid to their judgment, grow careless in the calculation, and throw them together in a vague, uncertain manner ; and if they find they have made them too small in one year, swell them to an extravagant amount in the next.

These evils I am endeavouring, by every means and method of control and precaution, to suppress, and to introduce a system of real economy in every article of expense ; but a free grant of our estimates

ment ; but there can be little doubt that it was intended for the First Lord of the Treasury, who was also Chancellor of the Exchequer.

is the necessary foundation of the whole, and any infringement on this part of the plan will put my purpose wholly out of my power.

If the present admiralty had placed that confidence in my endeavours which I had always met with from former ones, and which is necessary to give the effect ; and if they would have had a little patience, till the event could have spoken for itself, I would have answered, in the course of two years, to have brought every article of expense into as narrow a compass as the nature thereof would admit, and into a method of being managed with every degree of regularity, with the works and stores put into so complete a state, as in any future war should have saved those enormous sums, of which, in like situations, contractors have always contrived to gain from the public.

But from the disposition that has shown itself in finding fault with arrangements that are only in preparation, and other circumstances relative to myself, I have little expectation of support from that quarter. The system of economy which I am endeavouring to establish will be a lasting one, and will, if permitted, enable future ministers to keep down the navy debt, and thereby prevent the usual exorbitant discount on navy bills and contracts. The good effects are too numerous and of too extensive a nature to be communicated by letter, but will gradually show themselves in a lessening of the expenses, in an economy pervading every branch of the department, and in giving the navy board a decided superiority in all bargains and transactions with contractors, if they are not prevented by an ill-timed parsimony.

I have the honour to be, with much respect and esteem

MIDDLETON TO PITT

[*Rough draft.*]

July, 1786.

Sir,—I have just had the surveyors with me relative to the probable expenses of a permanent peace establishment, and we have agreed on the following as the most probable conjecture that can be formed on that subject. I have, at the same time, no doubt, from the present state of the fleet and from the adequate supply of stores and the improvement in the dockyards, that it will fall considerably under the sum we have marked. Previous steps are, however, necessary for this end, and the ground-work of them ought to have been the subject of much conversation between the first lord of the admiralty and comptroller of the navy long since, and the preparation insensibly taking place, so as to avoid the disgust and discontent that must always attend hasty reductions. But such has been the treatment that I have met with in office since the coming in of the present admiralty, that I have never had one hour's conversation with the first lord on any subject relative to the department in all that time. His first setting out was a visit to the dockyards when they were naturally in a state of disorder on the paying off the fleet, without deigning to communicate his intention, though I saw him the morning previous to his setting out; and the issue was finding fault with every preparation we had been making for a proper disposition of the stores—a plan which, I will venture to say, has already paid itself in point of labour, and will do so one hundred fold in the issuing and preservation of the stores.

The next step was to alter the disposition of the navy board, without condescending to the least enquiry how the business was arranged, in what

lines the principal branches lay, and who were the most proper persons for conducting them. I did not presume much when I thought some attention due to myself in those particulars, as the forming proper returns for the dockyards and the new arrangement of the standing orders had cost me some years of the closest labour I had ever undergone in my life. The business, too, had been lined out to the best of my judgment, and placed in such hands as I could depend upon for integrity and execution. All this, however, was done away by one ministerial stroke, and my labour and experience treated with imperious contempt. In my office, I was represented as the sole voice of the navy board, as consulting with no persons whatever, but conducting and carrying on the business by my own sole will. That I did, in a measure, conduct the whole business of the navy board during the last war is certainly true, and whoever is comptroller of the navy in a future war must do so likewise, if preparation, secrecy and expedition is expected in the army or naval department ; but to suppose such a degree of labour and application as the employing my whole time was either pleasing or consorted with my health is giving me a degree of credit which I do not deserve. As the peace advanced, and the plans I had laid for regulation and economy took place, I gradually brought every article of business back to its original channel ; and but for the active disposition that was shown to lessen my authority in office, a few weeks would have found me retired as much within my own general line of duty as if I had never stepped beyond it. Those who had done duty with me all the war flatly refuted the secret complaints that had been made by a self-interested person, who had been appointed to the board in the peace and

[stops abruptly.]

24th August, 1786.

Sir,—I have not been unmindful of your injunction concerning the accounts called for on the subject of the impress service, but we have not yet received what belongs to the victualling and sick-and-hurt boards. They have been reminded of it, and have promised their parts in a short time. As soon as the whole is collected, I will take an early opportunity of waiting on you with it, and, if agreeable, lay before you at the same time the book of instructions alluded to in my observations to Mr. Baring on the constitution of the Navy Book.

This book has occupied many of my leisure hours for some years past, and with such assistance as I have been able to procure, it now waits a favourable opportunity of being brought into use.

At present we have no fixed rule of government in our dockyards. Length of time and change of circumstances have occasioned such an accumulation of contradictory orders, that the officers, if inclined to do well, are not furnished with proper information ; and if otherwise, they find so many holes to creep out at, that it is beyond the powers of office to counteract them.

I must own to you, Sir, that I have seen with concern, since I have been in office, the very loose manner in which business has been conducted, and the great waste of money that is occasioned thereby. The reformation of this line of the service, as connected with the office, has been very near my heart. I keep it still in view, and have no other fears about the practicability of carrying it into execution, but that the commissioners will not care to enter so deeply into the enquiry as I could wish them to do, for their own conviction. If it should prove other-ways, and I am entrusted with the means of doing

my part, I shall feel no reluctance (however arduous the task) in undertaking it. I am aware of what I have to contend with, both in and out of office ; but I know, at the same time, that prudence, caution, and firmness, with a single eye to the public good, under the countenance of an upright minister, is capable of bringing mighty matters to pass.

The principle of our dockyards at present is a total disregard to public economy in all its branches ; and it is so rooted in the professional officers, that they cannot divest themselves of it when brought into higher stations. They have so many relations and dependents, too, in the dockyards, that can only be served by countenancing and promoting improper expenses, that they never lose an opportunity of supporting them when in their power, and on this account ought to have as small a voice as possible in creating them.

The subject is so comprehensive, that it can only be explained by detail ; but in the outline I have proposed, every part has been considered ; and if an alteration in consequence of the enquiry should take place, I shall be ready to give every assistance in my power to those who may be employed to carry it into execution, being with much esteem. . . .

P.S.—As far as my experience reaches, I am very confident that large sums indeed may be saved in the civil department of the navy, if a proper arrangement takes place at the office and in the dockyards ; but it will be absolutely necessary that no expense of any kind shall be ordered by the navy board, without the approbation and consent of the comptroller. I cannot say that the practice has been general in my time, but the check is a proper one and very constitutional, as all bills originate in his office.

26th August, 1786.

The account sent herewith of hemp and masts was procured from very good authority in 1781, when the idea prevailed in the cabinet of purchasing all the hemp that could be procured at Petersburg and Riga ; but finding it impracticable, it was given up.

The consumption of hemp in the year 1779, on the part of the navy, was about 9000 tons ; but when at the highest in 1781, 12,000, including about 2000 tons of Riga. But I am of opinion 10,000 tons will be a sufficient quantity under a proper management of the fleet in any future war. The annual consumption at present is about 3000 tons ; and the quantity in store about 2800, exclusive of 4600 contracted for and to be delivered in this and early in the next year. Great Britain consumes very near 2-3rds of what grows at Petersburg.

It does not occur to me that any inconvenience can attend a neutrality, but in the article of naval stores. In that article, neither France nor Spain can be supplied in time of war, but by the consent or inactivity of Great Britain ; and, if permitted by neutral vessels, it will exceedingly strengthen the operations of their fleet against this country. It is incredible how much they suffered in the two former wars from our command of the Baltic trade.

[It is unnecessary to print in full the details of this trade in naval stores. The following abstract of part of them is sufficient to illustrate Middleton's argument as to the inadvisability of giving neutrals a free hand in the matter :

1779.	Masts and Spars.	Hemp, of all sorts.
Great Britain . . .	2739	27,554 tons
France . . .	1968	194 tons
Holland . . .	3425	6932 tons

A much greater proportion of the masts for Great Britain being large—exceeding 21 inches. Very few of those for France were of this size.]

The greater share of the 1855 masts for Holland are for French account. They were intended to be shipped last year [1781], but the ships freighted for them were put back in Admiral Zoutman's convoy, and only arrived this year (1782); all of them under Imperial or Prussian colours.

Hertford Street. 5th September, 1786.

Sir,—It has occurred to me since I had the honour of seeing you, that a rough account was kept in my office of the neutral ships detained by order of government in the last war, and whose claims were directed to be adjusted and paid by the navy board; and, as they may afford some useful information in the present moment, I have sent them for your perusal.

This business was shamefully in arrear when I came to the navy board, owing to a want of energy in government, and the interested delays of the court of admiralty, which obliged us, in many instances, to pay double the value of the cargoes on account of demurrage. I proposed, in order to put a stop to this unwarrantable delay, and to avoid giving unnecessary umbrage to the neutral powers, that a specification of the cargo of every ship, as detained and reported to the admiralty, should be immediately forwarded to the navy board to enable them to judge of the nature of the cargo, and if not materially useful for naval purposes, that she might be immediately released.

If this measure had been adopted, the general indignation¹ that was raised against this country would have been avoided, many thousands of pounds would have been saved, and no idea of an armed neutrality would have suggested itself to the

¹ The draft has 'cry.'

northern powers. But all I could urge on the subject was to no purpose. The judge of the admiralty pronounced it inconsistent with the rules of his court, and it continued till the whole world were in arms against us. What I proposed was certainly inconsistent with the fees of the court of admiralty ; but in every other respect, as simple a proposition as could have been offered, and as easy of execution.

¹ [Mr. Pitt will see from the nature of the cargoes, how very few of them were materially naval, and what trash we were obliged to purchase in consequence of an order in council, and the absurd decrees of the admiralty court.]

It is however certain that the confinement of the ships when freight ran high, and not the stopping and purchasing the cargoes, exasperated the merchants, and occasioned the complaints against us. The armed neutrality followed, and will probably continue to do so ; but every agreement of this kind must be looked upon as pointed at the strongest naval power, and if generally admitted must prove very injurious in its consequences. It ought therefore, in my humble opinion, to be combated and rejected at any sacrifice ; and in all future treaties of commerce, the articles of naval stores to be specifically entered amongst the contraband, and not left to dispute, as they are equally warlike² in their consequences with many others named in that article.

It is incredible how much this country suffered in the war of 1755, from the circumstance of free ships making free goods in our treaty with Holland, and which enabled the Dutch to keep alive the trade of France when otherwise annihilated. If

¹ Inserted from the draft.

² The draft has : ' as gunpowder, ball, &c.

this could be done away in any future treaty with that power, it would be a great point gained and very useful to this country in any future war with France and Spain. The being continued to these last, in any other point of view than raising a jealousy in Russia, is of little consequence, as they are in fact but one power, and our enemies in all general wars. If offered to Russia in place of neutrality, it would be a good exchange; and as neither she nor Portugal are furnished with many ships of their own, the object is not worth contesting with them.

It is for hemp only we are dependent on Russia. Masts can be procured from Nova Scotia, and iron in plenty from the ores of this country; but as it is impracticable to carry on a naval war without hemp, it is materially necessary to promote the growth of it in this country and Ireland.¹

I beg pardon for the liberty I have taken in offering my sentiments on this subject, and which I should not have done, but for the encouragement you were pleased to give me, and to prove the respect and esteem . . .

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Hertford Street. 23rd September, 1786.

Sir,—As I think it will trespass less on your time if the book which I mentioned as containing the regulations for the civil branch of the navy be put into your carriage, so that you may have an opportunity of casting your eye over it at a leisure hour in the country, I have used the freedom of sending it for that purpose, and in order to save you the trouble of much perusal, I enclose an

¹ This paragraph is not in the draft.

explanatory note with the general heads of what it contains.

This abstract has not only occupied all my leisure hours since the commencement of the peace, but engaged much of my attention in preparing materials for it in the war, and as I have no other legible copy in my possession, I shall request the favour of its being returned before the commissioners enter upon their enquiry at the navy office.

The idea you expressed on the constitution of a public office when I had the honour of seeing you on that subject, is so literally what I wish the navy board to be in its arrangement and discipline, that it will be unnecessary for me to trouble you further than to entreat your influence in communicating such hints to the commissioners as may form a groundwork for bringing it about. I would just add, that, as far as I know myself, I speak impartially on the subject of reform; but after the pains I have taken to attempt at order and economy, I should be wanting to my own feeble endeavours if I omitted any information in my power to obtain it, and if not procured by means of the present commission under your auspices, I see no prospect of it ever being brought about under any other.

Enclosure

[*Endorsed* : Explanation of the Book of Navy Board Warrants and reasons for undertaking it.]

18th September, 1786.

Sir Charles Middleton is exceedingly anxious that Mr. Pitt should acquire an adequate notion of the navy board department. It is a national concern of the first magnitude; all our exertions on our proper element depend wholly on the management of it, and the things respecting it at present are in such

a state as requires all the attention and influence of a virtuous minister to fix them on a foundation of public utility.

When he came into office in September 1778, he found it in the greatest disorder, and the dockyards without any fixed rules of government. Things had gradually attained this perplexity of situation from the want of regular returns to simplify the business ; from the daily repetition and accumulation of general warrants to meet each present difficulty as it arose, perhaps without having the least reference to the general principle on which they had been at first established ; from the multiplied business, and an incredible weight of correspondence produced by the great increase of the fleet, and the various services in which it was at that time to be employed ; the whole heightened by the entire want of method and arrangement in every branch.

That the standing orders of the navy may be preserved in force, they are to be read over once in three months in the several dockyards. These had been gradually accumulating from the year 1658, and had received great accessions of regulations well adapted to the then state of the navy, while James II—at that time Duke of York—was Lord High Admiral. But from change of circumstances and inattention, in the daily additions, to the general principles of the service, they had become so contradictory and thereby had grown into such disuse as to be truly ridiculous in this point of view, and to leave each yard to follow their own opinions of their duty ; for the rules were general, the practice of each yard had become different. The original returns had undergone the like changes, and though nominally kept up, yet except in some very particular points, led to no elucidation, and formed no effectual check. They were therefore in a great measure left un-

examined and neglected. Accounts of every kind had run so far behindhand as to be absolutely useless for the purpose of comptrolling and keeping within bounds the yard expenses. In the meantime, the current business, with the progress of the war, became so complicated and pressing, that every other consideration was obliged to give way to it.

Such officers as were inclined to act properly had no fixed instructions to direct their conduct; those who had other views had so many holes to creep out at, as put it out of the power of office to detect them. Almost every efficient appointment in the yards being in the admiralty, and frequently made an object of interest, officers feel less anxious for their conduct, and particularly when they know that a proper vote would cover a corrupt practice. In particular very improper connections are formed between contractors and the offices; and the public suffers in thousands for a trifling gratuity received by a yard officer.

In the office, custom had transferred all business of accounts to the head clerks; the board's hours of business were spent in framing and discussing of difficulties, till the pressing occasion forced them to leave things to take their course, and order them—not as they should, but as they could be done. In short the dockyards were without discipline or method, and the board without decision or control.

It is not meant by this description to make any retrospect, or direct any censure; much of what had been done and become reprehensible may be ascribed to the nation's particular situation at the time, and the sudden increase of business, for which no preparation had been made and to which the forms of office were not adequate.

Under these difficulties, all that could at first be proposed was to observe and mark abuses as

they arose, and keep a watchful eye over the whole. To attempt an entire change was impracticable ; difficulties were to be encountered and faults corrected only singly, as they arose. By going insensibly on in this way, a considerable progress was made in point of time, and while the whole appeared to be a mass of confusion, most of the material branches had attained no mean degree of order, and suffered no inconsiderable correction. Still, the bad construction of the navy board (which is pointed out in another place) for the expediting of business, and the little dependence of the yard officers on it for obtaining or keeping their places, left, unabated, defects by which the public is most materially injured. I had only to hope that a return of peace, and a co-operating admiralty, would enable me to set everything right, and introduce method and economy into the whole.

In searching into the books of office, I found that, in Lord Egmont's time, warrants had been issued, anno 1764 and 1767¹ for arranging the navy board warrants to that period. At the return of peace in 1783, this order remained unexecuted ; it furnished, however, an excellent foundation for agitating a business that the late situation of things had made still more necessary. At that time I met with no opposition to any proposal that had the public advantage in view. I procured a ready consent to take to my assistance such help as I could get for giving some shape and form to this heap of confusion. The orders—those especially for the government of the dockyards, that were to be arranged—lay scattered, often without even the order of dates, in five or six folio volumes ; all, but a very few of the principal officers, were with-

¹ Egmont was first lord from September 1763 to August 1766. In 1767 Hawke was first lord.

out any written instructions for their guidance. By employing almost the whole of my leisure time both in town and in country, I have been at last able to abstract and arrange under a few comprehensive heads the whole of these orders to the present month. The inferior officers of the several yards have been made to give in, each his own idea of his duty ; and from a comparison of the whole, one simple uniform rule has been drawn up for each, and incorporated in the abstract.

As this work, before it can be enforced in its new shape, must be submitted in succession to the review of the navy and admiralty boards, whenever the one shall have leisure, and the other an inclination to promote it, it has been the object to omit nothing rather than curtail anything. Still, in its present form, it has been found of the greatest service. On our visitation of the dockyards last year, it was of signal use, and it is daily referred to for regulating and expediting matters. It is intended after revisal, to have the whole printed for the use of the admiralty and navy boards, and for the dockyards ; and to furnish each officer with his own and the instruction of those under him. An idea of the whole may be received from perusing the preface and scheme here drawn out.

The foreign yards being distant, subject to great abuse, and without a check, required immediate attention. New instructions were drawn up, and have received the former admiralty's approbation ; they are printed and in force. The consequence is, that in the middle of last month we had satisfactory returns to the 30th of June last.

The ordinary of the navy, or in other words the ships that are laid up in port, had been so little an object of attention that its whole government depended on parts of a few scattered orders in the

various volumes of warrants, which did not apply to the present state of the fleet. Those, after much opposition and many difficulties started, have been collected into one and considerably enlarged. They were approved by the former admiralty, and printed. They are hung up on board of every ship in ordinary, and a new officer has been appointed to see them carried into execution. A copy of these, with the instructions for the foreign yards, as now in use, accompanies the book.

No time was lost for putting this most essential business into train on the return of the peace, and the success exceeds our most sanguine expectations, both for the excellent order and preservation of the ships, and readiness for being brought into service. With this last view an establishment was framed of stores in store berths, for ships in good condition. This has been completed ; and is so secured, by regular returns, that no disappointment can happen, nor any improper advantage be taken by contractors on any emergency. In this respect we have left only to wish, that the admiralty would make fewer changes in the ships in commission, and only when necessary to take them in hand for great repairs. The annual unnecessary expense of stores occasioned by the contrary practice is enormous ; and what perhaps may be of still more consequence, our artificers are constantly taken off from the essential repairs of the fleet, to fit these changed ships for and from ordinary. Thus the repairs are interrupted, our best ships worn out in time of peace, and we are disabled from contracting our yard establishments.

While these regulations were carrying on, care was taken to adapt the returns more completely to the present state of things. Those for the several periods are arranged, and new ones are formed for

ascertaining the supplies of stores in due time and checking the expense, and the utmost care has been taken to make them accurate, and bring every charge within its estimate. The examination of them has been placed in the hands of such commissioners as could be depended on ; and, to secure their attention, they are to be marked with their initials when examined.

Luckily for me, and, I may humbly say, for the public service, these measures were resolved and thus far carried into execution before the present admiralty board was formed. But since that time, the navy board, without consultation or enquiry into circumstances, has suffered a new arrangement of commissioners. One member,¹ on whose integrity and application I had the highest dependence, and who indeed was my right hand in confidential communication, though an officer of tried experience and service, has been, without any previous notice, removed from his seat, and a new and unnecessary one, at a much greater charge to the public, has been brought to the board. By this single act, all arrangements for checking expenses and introducing method and order are overturned. Necessity alone has enabled me to struggle against the consequences of this ill-judged measure.

The abuses were so glaring, and the estimates so loosely framed, that the real expenses always greatly exceeded them ; in one year preceding the peace the ordinary charges alone exceeded the grants by £90,000. Though weighed down with the affairs of my own department and the current business of the office, I have been obliged since this arrangement took place to examine all returns of expense myself, to keep them within bounds, and

¹ Captain Wallis appears to be indicated. *Cf. ante*, p. 182, Middleton to Howe, 17th November, 1784.

which it is impossible that I can continue to go through with, if the office and board remain in its present state.

Situated as things now are, there is no opening left for my advancing one step further ; I am afraid of moving anything, lest I should give occasion for undoing what is already settled ; the reasons, I would rather have discovered by others than told by myself. In short no consideration would have induced me to have continued in office after this change, but for the persuasion of my friends and the expectation of seeing a proper arrangement brought about by means of the commissioners of enquiry. These gentlemen will doubtless be able to mark the tendency and utility of what has been already done, as well as the necessity of completing the whole. It is a comfortable reflection that much is not needed to put a finishing hand to the business. It will consist chiefly in completing the regulations of the home-yards, and arranging the navy board for expediting business in such a manner as may appear best to themselves for that purpose.

CHARLES MIDDLETON.

Enclosure 2

[*Endorsed* : Abstract of General Heads of Standing Orders as they stand in the Book of Warrants, with the Order that is proposed to accompany them.]

[It seems unnecessary to print these, the general purport of which is sufficiently intimated in Enclosure 1, as well as in other documents.]

MIDDLETON TO FRANCIS BARING¹[*Rough draft.*]

[? December, 1786.]

Dear Sir,—Having experienced inexpressible difficulty and fatigue in carrying on the public business during the course of the late war, from the insufficiency of the present forms of the navy board which have continued the same ever since its first institution, though the extent and nature of the charge has become infinitely enlarged, and exceedingly different, I feel great satisfaction in the prospect of seeing an end put to an evil of this magnitude by the appointment of commissioners adequate to every purpose of enquiry.

It is with a view to lessen your trouble that I enclose for your information the general defects in the constitution of this board, from whence much delay arises in the execution, and infinite loss from the manner wherein business is carried on. I have always so suggested the remedy which, as things struck me at the time, I should have applied had the means been in my power. You will be able to judge on examination how far they may be proper or practicable. Those gentlemen, who, contented with an easy official attendance, came and went as inclination or convenience led them, being unacquainted with the anxiety I felt from the responsibility of my station and the important secret business trusted to my execution by his Majesty's ministers, were satisfied with an arrangement which, when they had other avocations, gave them convenient leisure to pursue them, and, when they were pleased to meddle, left them all the importance of office.

¹ Chairman of the Commission of Enquiry.—See *D.N.B.*

I should, indeed, do them injustice, if I did not also acknowledge, that their manner of leaving whatever required despatch to my management, showed a confidence in me that was not only necessary, but pleasing ; but this situation, so convenient and flattering, must leave them without a wish for any change ; and this must be more particularly the case with such of them as, having been appointed since the restoration of peace, knew nothing of the hurry and difficulties attending a state of war. I have not the same reasons for being content with the present state of things. A concern for my own character and that of my successors in office coincides intimately with my persuasion that the public interest requires such a reformation. I wish to see a mode established for the expeditious and methodical despatch of business, and the strict investigation of public accounts. I have prepared you from whence you are to expect objections ; and though I wish not to go beyond my own office till it becomes necessary for the public good, yet having assured Mr. Pitt of my readiness to accompany you in all your researches where faults may be corrected or reformation attained, I shall be happy when I can be made useful in this extensive branch of your investigation. But it will at once appear to the commissioners, that when it is not strictly necessary to call upon me officially for information, they will reap most benefit from my assistance by not otherways bringing me openly forward. My communications, too, must necessarily be confined to themselves and Mr. Pitt ; I wish not to create jealousy, nor, by any preference shown me, to stimulate to contradiction, either at the navy or admiralty boards. I would rather be left in the crowd, that by my ready acquiescence in your regulations, I may be an example of willing obedience to them.

Indeed, retrospect will do little good except to point out the necessary corrections. Could matters be at last put into a proper train, my wish respecting them would be satisfied; yet except to enable you to draw advantage from my private information without producing ill-temper or encouraging opposition, I have no selfish purpose to answer to make secrecy necessary. It is on the separation of the business which I have suggested, whereon indeed I place my principal hopes of reformation, from whence we may expect the best methods for securing despatch, and saving the public money. By forming a plan for the regulation of the whole suited to present circumstances, particular abuses will be discovered and corrected in the course of investigation.

In the paper enclosed, I have been obliged to say more of my own efforts in office than would have become me under any other circumstances; but there occurred to me no other such striking method of laying before the commissioners, in proper colours, the difficulties on the removal of which so much depends; and I am fearful after all, that the abuses which exist lay so deep that they cannot be effectually removed by any other means than a hearty zeal, and co-operation and communication, between the first lord of the admiralty and the comptroller of the navy.

I am with much esteem, dear Sir,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

CHARLES MIDDLETON.

THE NAVY BOARD¹

[? December, 1786.]

The Navy Board originally consisted of a few members who were distinguished, after the appointment of additional commissioners, by the name of principal officers, as may be seen by the ordinary estimate of 1685, in an old office book in the possession of Mr. Thomas. This board, acting under the lord high admiral, has the superintendency and regulation of the whole civil establishment of the navy committed to its charge; all naval estimates are formed at it, and the grants and expenses managed by it. As the increase of business occasioned an additional appointment of commissioners, some branches of the comptroller's office were placed under their inspection, viz. the control of treasurer's accounts, victualling accounts, store keeper's accounts, and ticket office.

Comptroller

The comptroller's duty is to conduct the general business of the board, to superintend the offices belonging to his department, to attend the great officers and offices of state, and, on some occasions, the cabinet council; to carry their orders, which are frequently secret, into execution, and in short to see every part of the business of the office properly executed. It is also his duty to control the payment of half-pay at the pay office; the payment of the

¹ This paper is, presumably, the rough draft of the 'Enclosure' sent to Mr. Baring. It is written in a small 4to. paper book, and is full of corrections, deletions, interlineations and transpositions, difficult to read, with no certainty or even probability that the result is textually that of the final copy. We may, however, feel assured that the sense is in entire agreement.

dockyards of Deptford and Woolwich, and of such ships as are paid at these ports. But the business at the board having increased to such a degree as to require his daily attendance, he has been obliged to call for the help of the commissioners who attend payments in Broad Street to assist him in this part of his duty. The comptroller also visits Deptford and Woolwich yards weekly, when in his power, and the more distant yards occasionally, when duty requires it. His pay and other emoluments are as follows :

	£
As comptroller . . .	500 per ann. net
and half pay . . .	180
Coal and candle . . .	90
Visiting Deptford and Woolwich . . .	114
Premiums on clerks, about . . .	315
Army victualling . . .	300

£1499 with a house and taxes

I was appointed to this office in August, 1778. The board at that time consisted of a comptroller, two surveyors, clerk of the acts and five commissioners. The correspondence, from the great increase of the fleet, was very voluminous, and the business, from its variety, inexpressibly intricate. The whole continued to be transacted at one table, with the same irregularity, as matters came by chance before us. No means had been taken for dividing the business, nor any provision made for despatch and economy in carrying it on. Some members were overloaded with business, while others came and went as best suited their own conveniency; and it fell of course to my share to bring things to some conclusion out of this

indigested heap, before the day ended, be it right or wrong. The natural consequences were,—hasty decisions, accounts passed with very little examination, and a perplexing variety of opinions on the most simple subjects. This irksome situation during the late extensive war would have been found intolerable, had not the influence which I derived from the entire confidence placed in me by his Majesty's ministers given me that authority which is not attached to my office.

Imagine but for a moment, a very great number of different subjects before a board thus constituted, in which a great part of the commissioners had very little interest, but could, at any time, delay business by raising doubts and starting objections, even while occasion pressed, and necessity called for immediate decision that matters might not be retarded, nor suffered to run irretrievably into arrear. If to this be added a correspondence with upwards of 2000 correspondents, the surprise will not be that things were hastily done, and many important accounts left to the examination of clerks, but that the comptroller, who considered himself as answerable for the whole, did not despair of success and give up every attempt to conduct the public business. Amongst the five commissioners, I had only one¹ sea commissioner to assist me in the professional line; and, notwithstanding every attention was paid to the various branches of which it consisted, the business was in danger of falling into arrear. I was therefore under the necessity of applying to Lord Sandwich and Lord North for more assistance in this line, when Captain Wallis,² of the *Queen*, was added to the board as a third extra commissioner.

¹ Captain Edward Le Cras.

² Samuel Wallis, the circumnavigator.

The arrangement which I then made was to charge Commissioner Le Cras, in addition to his other business, with the supply of stores to the ships at home and on the foreign stations, and Commissioner Wallis to assist me in the management of transports and army victuallers, of which we had some hundreds in our employ. The third gentleman, Sir Richard Temple, not being a professional commissioner, kept an account of all the papers and letters that were referred to particular offices, and checked their returns. These were so immense and had been so little attended to, as to have occasioned great delay and much unnecessary disappointment. This arrangement, with an entire new set of returns, was found in its consequences extremely useful. By separating the active duties from accounts, and the comptroller superintending the whole, everything was done in order; despatch was visible in every line, and nothing materially necessary omitted that could give despatch to the operations of the fleet. The squadrons at home and abroad, being amply supplied with stores, were kept in constant service; and the army, being equally so with transports and provisions, no complaints of any kind were received after the navy board undertook the management of this service. The extravagant purchases, which had been usually made abroad, were kept under, and the satisfaction felt by commanding officers in very critical situations, both in the East and West Indies, was very fully expressed.

On the return of the peace, I set about an arrangement of the dockyard instructions which lay scattered in many folio volumes. The whole has been since digested under a few simple heads, and brought into a fairness of method that the mass of confusion, of which they originally consisted, seemed

incapable of ; and by having formed a very particular and copious index, they may be reduced into a still more clear and useful order for consultation and checking abuses. As my only hope for introducing method and economy into the dockyards depended on these standing orders, I prevailed on the navy board to make a minute for allowing me assistance for carrying on this work under my own inspection, having previously brought forward every improvement during the war as occasions, which were numerous and extended to almost every circumstance, suggested to me.

On the strength of this minute, and an admiralty warrant issued in 1764, the work was brought to an end in 1784 and laid before the navy board, that a committee might examine, correct and prepare it for admiralty inspection. The whole consists of five general heads, the first of which only has been examined and corrected, owing to a variety of circumstances which are needless to mention ; but as a reference to it may be a means of giving the commissioners much information on the extensiveness and variety of the ordinary business of the board and the duty of the dockyards, I would recommend it as worthy of their attention, and proper to be brought forward if any new regulations should take place.

The periodical returns, on which accuracy and economy very much depended, were loose, ill adapted and useless for those purposes ; they were sent up to the respective offices from the dockyards and laid up there by the clerks as waste paper ; the consequence of which was that the board had no check over the yard expenses, nor any good information respecting the real state of the stores. The very year of the peace the ordinary expenses of the navy exceeded the grants

by £90,000. It was with much concern that I remarked this and many other extravagances, but there was no ready means of correction. I had no decided power but that of personal influence and the great share I had in the management of the business in office. An entire new set of returns, however, applying to the present state of the dock-yards was formed, and by an obstinate perseverance, in the teeth of the irregularity, ignorance, and negligence of the yard officers, which were found beyond description perplexing, they are now brought into better than tolerable order, and fully recompense for the trouble which I felt in establishing them. They are to be found in the abstract of instructions.

This point being established, I formed an arrangement for the examination of them, the best I could without exciting jealousy, and put them into the hands of such commissioners as could be most depended on for correctness and punctuality.

My next concern was the regulations for government of the ships and men in ordinary of the navy, and instructions for the foreign yards. They have been accordingly formed, confirmed and printed, and are now in general use. Both are to be found in the book of standing orders. Minutes of reformation have been also introduced as to postage, stationery, messengers, and other contingencies of office; but I found the task so extremely invidious, and my powers so inadequate to the degree of abuse, that I was obliged to content myself with gaining a very little; and being afterwards informed by Lord Shelburne of his intentions towards a public enquiry, I thought it best to keep the ground that was got and to trust to abler hands for the completion of it.

From this short sketch which I have given of the business, it will be seen that by introducing

indiscriminately all matters as they arise at the board, the correspondence, on which the whole depends, is continually interrupted, business of the utmost importance is delayed, and subjects of the greatest consequence permitted to pass, often with little examination. From hasty decisions and superficial enquiries in that variety and real load of business which is continually transacting, loss of opportunity and a countless waste of treasure unavoidably follow. In this way of managing business many material branches are of a necessity entrusted to clerks. In the comptroller's branch it is unavoidable. His whole time is employed in preparing business, in conducting the correspondence and general matters before the board. To this he has added a voluminous particular correspondence on public business, and frequent attendance at public offices and on the king's ministers. Let this be added to the other ordinary and occasional business, writing and signing in office, and it may appear surprising how such a correspondence could possibly be kept up.

The truth is there was a necessity for keeping it strictly under during the war, for if the business of the preceding day had been suffered to mix with the current day, the board could not have gone on; and as the preparation and arrangement fell of course to the comptroller, he retired from the board only to bring forward at home the business of the next meeting; and as the whole depended on an extraordinary exertion, which sickness and numberless accidents might have checked, 'tis evident the conducting of such important matters ought not again to rest on so precarious a foundation.

In King William's time, though the business was not the shadow of what it has risen to, the

comptroller was allowed an assistant. The want of such a help was severely felt during the war, when almost the whole correspondence of the army victualling, transportation of troops and secret expeditions was thrown on me, independent of all the other business of the board. To keep matters from standing still, I was obliged to transcribe and copy letters which, if done by another hand, would have enabled me to have given more particular attention to the great lines of the office. This correspondence, for want of such assistance, is not yet carried into office, but remains in my possession.

I have already hinted that the accumulating business which daily comes before the board puts it out of their power to examine, with that scrupulous nicety which their importance requires, the public accounts belonging to their department ; and though much was done and every measure was embraced (that this want of method, which I had not authority to correct, admitted) to save the public from imposition, yet it was impossible, without a total change, to reach that correctness which the magnitude of the object required. From the first, I saw the insufficiency, and felt the evil consequences of a hasty decision, but I found it impossible in the present arrangement of the business to contrive a remedy.

The articles which I allude to as requiring a more minute examination, are:—forming of contracts, indulgences asked for by contractors, claims or declarations for original contracts, charter parties, disputed charges, accounts of officers and others when difficulties arise, prices of works and stores supplied on valuation, slops and stores over-issued on board of ship by pursers, boatswains and carpenters, claims of wages, imprest bills, estimates, extra allowances, purveyors' accounts, distribution

of stores at the several yards, periodical accounts, salvage of stores, jobs in dockyards, experiments, marine accounts, messengers' accounts, and many others which will appear in the course of examining the several officers. If any method is adopted for this purpose, defects in the several branches may be discovered and corrected, and incredible sums, which, under the present practice, must pass almost wholly without enquiry, may be checked and saved to the public. But after all, a much stronger controlling power than exists at present will be found absolutely necessary for conducting and giving energy to this great engine, and correcting the many defects to which it is subject in its present state. And even this power will prove insufficient if responsibility, in the most strict sense of the word, is not tacked to it.

Comptroller's Office for Bills and Accounts

is an office of great trust, and requires a head clerk, clear in apprehension, of unremitting attention and incorruptible integrity. The present is all this in a very high degree, and has been long in office. His duty will be best learnt from himself. The clerks under him have their several lines, and are, in general, expert in the knowledge of their duty. The business here being of necessity very much left to the head clerk, would make the loss almost irreparable, if any accident should carry him off in the midst of a war.

Comptroller's Office for Foreign Accounts

is directed by a principal clerk under the inspection of the head clerk. They bring up, and state for examination, accounts of officers serving abroad—admirals, commodores, naval officers, clerks of the

check and other accountants. It will be found, by the instructions given to the foreign yards and home yards, that the cash accounts and vouchers are as regularly sent into office as the nature of the service will admit. But, notwithstanding this and every other precaution, the checks are not sufficient for the examination of accounts of such magnitude as some of them will be found to be.

Comptroller's Office for Seamen's Wages

is a check on the payments on ships' books, yard books, &c. These books are kept too open, and I do not see how it can be remedied. In the early past of [the] navy, the comptroller attended all payments himself, and the books were kept carefully under lock and key. But the increased state of it has thrown so much other business into his hands, that they have been left in a great measure to his clerks at the outports and in town. It requires a particular knowledge of the manner of keeping ships' books and accounts, of acts of parliament concerning these matters, of naval instructions, and the mode of casting and adjusting payments by the treasurer of the navy. The head clerk will explain the business more particularly. He has several clerks under him, who are occasionally employed in the navy office, in making up ships' books at the treasurer's office, and attending payments in London and at the outports. As this office has a very great share of accumulated business in war and great arrears afterwards, the extra commissioners' clerks, having no other business, are also employed in this office and in that [of] bills and accounts, agreeable to the usage of office. The clerks belonging to the comptroller, in this office, who are employed in payments and making up books, are allowed extra wages.

Offices in general

From the general knowledge I have of the business and the great share I took in conducting every particular part of it during the war, I am of opinion that a much better arrangement may be found than exists at present, and particularly in the surveyor's office, which is not qualified for accounts, nor providing stores out of their own professional branch.

Appointment of Clerks

It is necessary that the commissioners should be informed that clerks, on their entry, pay a stipulated sum of money to the commissioner in whose branch they are entered. This practice, however justified by time, is attended with many bad consequences, and [is] very unbecoming of members of a public board. It makes a very considerable part, however, of some of the commissioners' emoluments, but should be done away. I have been informed that the introduction of this custom proceeded from the clerks being bound apprentices, in the early past of the institution, to the several commissioners.

Defects in Naval Instructions

These were noted or discovered, in the course of the war, in the civil or navy board department, and they have been since collected and arranged, each under its respective head, and have been laying before the admiralty board for examination upwards of two years.

Agency of Clerks

When seamen's wages were irregularly paid, clerks were permitted to act as their agents. That

necessity no longer exists, yet the practice is continued and extended to most cases. They are agents for officers and others having business or accounts to settle in the navy office. This drew after it an expense of stationery, postage, employment of messengers, &c., all of which indeed was some time ago corrected in part, and has been already mentioned, and will appear in the minutes. But other evils of greater consequence continue, which the present forms of the board cannot remedy.

Inspection of Buildings

In the building contracts, which have been and are now carrying on to a great extent in dockyards, that the storehouses and other buildings might be made adequate to the present increased state of the navy, an inspector had been employed, much to the chagrin and dislike of the yard officers. When I came to the N. B., I found Mr. Marquand employed in superintending the building of the marine barracks at Chatham, by admiralty appointment; and finding him an honest man, intelligent and attentive to his business, I proposed his being joined with the yard officers in forming reports and estimates in the several buildings in hand, in correcting their valuations of work done out of contract, and to employ him in superintending the works carrying on in that way. The advantages derived from his exertions have been of the utmost consequence to the public, both in respect of the goodness of the work and the reduction of the prices; of which I shall give one instance. The yard officers had made an estimate, by which the contractor was to be allowed at the rate of four pounds for certain work which Mr. Marquand reduced to 7s. 6d. It is needless to enquire whether

it was ignorance or otherwise ; the public in either case would have equally suffered. That the navy board are very unequal to the task of forming such contracts appears evidently from that made with Templar & Palby, in which some 100,000 pounds have been expended. He has also been employed in drawing up later contracts for buildings, and so much benefit has been reaped from his skill in these matters that the navy board—the surveyors excepted—recommended to the admiralty to continue him ; but to their great disappointment he has been discharged, and the inspection has fallen again into the hands of the dockyard officers, who have been found totally ignorant of the subject. It may be proper to examine Mr. Marquand himself and to peruse the correspondence that has passed between the admiralty and navy board on this subject. If it had been of less magnitude I should have passed it over.

Fees of Office

Those paid in the navy office, under the name of fees and gratuities, are of various sorts. Some cannot be said to be of any evil consequence ; others are exceedingly prejudicial to the public interest. Among the first may be reckoned those taken in the comptroller's office for bills, and that of treasurer's accounts and such like. These fees are received for making out or assigning bills, and are more considerable for their number, than their amount, singly taken. They affect not the public in the smallest degree, for there is no connection between the making the claim and the making out the bill for it ; and if taken away, it will be difficult to find the parties an equivalent. This business, so far as it respected my head clerk, Mr. Dacres, was mentioned to Lord Shelburne, when in office, who

promised that care should be taken that he should not suffer by any new arrangement. His extensive knowledge, correct judgment, unwearied application and incorruptible integrity makes his value in office inestimable. The manner in which his name was brought forward at that time in parliament hurt him so sensibly, that he was with the utmost difficulty prevailed on to continue in office. Yet his loss at that time would have been, and for several years must have continued to be, severely felt by the public. Indeed I have nobody under him whom I would wish to bring immediately forward in his line ; and though the public be fortunate enough to have one of his character in such an important office, yet it is of too much consequence to be continued to be committed to whatever person may chance to succeed him.

Improper or Prejudicial Fees

are those given to persons in office in order to procure favour or indulgence to the giver at the public expense, and which, except in the cases stated above, will be found to apply to most instances.

Transports

No part of the service stands more in need of reformation than this. The most enormous abuses are suffered to take place in it. Transports, when wanted to be taken up or bought, are surveyed by the master attendant, master shipwright and clerk of the survey of Deptford yard, and they are hired and freighted on their report ; and though every measure that caution can suggest is taken to prevent imposition, yet we have the strongest reason to believe it is still carried on, by its pernicious and extravagant effects. The yard officers ought to

have no part in this business. During the last war it employed almost the whole of their time, to the entire neglect of their own proper business. Captain Teer, who was our agent at Deptford, will be able to give every kind of information on this head. He is a man of strict probity and may be depended on. He is very conversant, too, with dockyard business, having been so long employed under the navy board at Deptford.

Contracts and Charter Parties

were formed originally in a very loose way and have occasioned several suits since the war has ended. They have been occasionally corrected, but are still very imperfect.

These are a few out of the many particulars that will suggest themselves to the commissioners on a nearer examination of the department. But, for more particular information, I would recommend to them Mr. Thomas, assistant to the clerk of the acts.¹ He is intelligent and has been long in office, and has constantly and cheerfully given me every possible assistance in conducting the service. But for his ready help, I could not have accomplished what I have done.

As I take it for granted you will not enter upon the dockyards till the establishment in London is finished, I shall not meddle with them at present.

¹ His salary was £450, to which was added £50 for a house. He died in 1789.

FROM THE COMMISSIONERS OF
ENQUIRY

Office of Enquiry, Whitehall.
11th December, 1786.

[Signed.]

Sir,—It was with great pleasure that we received your letter, with the book of observations accompanying it, for which we beg leave to return you our thanks, and to assure you that we shall know how to value what comes from such authority. We shall be happy to accept your offer of further communication in person, as early as may be mutually convenient. We have already laid out too much business for Thursday next, to be able to name that day; but as the Tuesday following is equally agreeable to you, we shall set that apart for the pleasure of seeing you at twelve o'clock, being the hour you mention. We have the honour to be,

Sir, your most obedient humble servants,

JOHN DICK,
WILLIAM MOLLESON,
F. BARING.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Hertford Street. 7th August, 1787.

Sir,—The inclosed having been sent to me with a view to my communicating Mr. Ramsay's¹ services to your notice, and Lord Sackville having had no opportunity of conversing with me on the means of acknowledging them before his death, I should be wanting in my usual friendship to Mr. Ramsay, if I declined the part Major Mitchell presses me to take in his favour.

¹ Cf. *ante*, vol. i. p. 46 *note*.

Mr. Ramsay's information to Lord G. Sackville on the situation and interests of the French and English Islands were always transmitted through my hands during the war, and his lordship frequently sent transcripts of them to the admiralty, and on every occasion acknowledged the importance they were of to the public service. No man was capable of giving more useful information, because none were so generally well acquainted with the interests of the islands, nor more to be depended on for veracity and disinterestedness.

Being my neighbour in the country and long acquainted with his talent for business, I have got him, since the peace, to assist me in abstracting and new modelling a very voluminous work of navy board regulations and warrants, and which I meant to have got established by admiralty authority, as necessary for concluding the business of the dockyards, if circumstances had been favourable to naval improvements. It will now be laid before the commissioners of enquiry, as properly coming within their line of examination.

In this, as well as every other concern I have had with Mr. Ramsay, whether public or private, I can speak with confidence of his ability and integrity, and if it should be thought proper at any time to promote him in the line of his profession, I am confident he will do credit to his patron.

I beg pardon for this trouble, and am with much esteem. . . .

Enclosure 1

P. Mitchell to Middleton

[*Holograph.*] St. George's Row, Hyde Park. 20th July, 1787.

Dear Sir,—Permit me to lay before you the accompanying view of the public services performed

by my worthy friend Mr. Ramsay, the authenticity of which you have, through the whole course of them, been perfectly acquainted with. I am particularly induced to take this step, because in a conversation which I had with the late Lord Sackville, some time before his death, he told me that he meant to consult with you in what manner my friend could be most effectually recommended by you both to the minister for promotion; which I imagine his unexpected death soon after prevented him from doing.

Mr. Ramsay's present narrow circumstances and confinement to his situation in Kent (not being able to support a curate) deprive the public of those advantages which would be derived from the unembarrassed exertion of his talents in a more liberal situation.

I have the honour. . . .

P. MITCHELL.

Enclosure 2

Statement of public services performed by the Reverend James Ramsay, Vicar of Teston, in Kent.

[*In Mitchell's writing.*]

The Reverend James Ramsay, now Vicar of Teston, in Kent, entered into the navy¹ in the year 1755, and continued in it six years, till, from a hurt received in the service, he contracted an insuperable lameness, which rendered a sea-life dangerous to him. During that period he had an opportunity, while under the command of Sir Charles Middleton, of observing the strength and defects of the service, and drew up an essay on the duty and qualification of a sea-officer, which has been several times reprinted, and has been warmly recommended by officers of the highest naval rank, as containing

¹ As assistant-surgeon.

much useful advice to young officers. In particular, he has laid down a plan in it for forming the naval signals into a regular language, where a few well chosen flags may be made to express every signal that can be wanted in the service.

In the year 1762, through the interest of Sir Charles Middleton, he had a living given him in the island St. Christopher. There he formed a plan for correcting the ill-treatment, and improving the condition of the slaves employed in the sugar colonies, which has been published, and has met with the approbation of every man of feeling and sentiment, but has brought unremitting persecution, bitter abuse, and even threats of assassination on the author, from those who could not bear to have their inhumanity brought to light.

About ten years ago he was introduced to the late Lord Sackville, and, on his return to the West Indies in the year 1778, was allowed the liberty of corresponding with him on affairs and occurrences relative to those islands, and the squadron stationed among them.¹ His lordship repeatedly acknowledged the utility of his communications, occasionally made use of the hints contained in them and expressed a wish to reward and promote him. In particular a little time before he died, he endeavoured to get him fixed in Rochester cathedral, as a prebendary, but happened to be too late in his application.

Having served near three years in the squadron stationed at Barbados and the Leeward Islands, during the war of 1756, and having resided in St. Kitts from the year 1762 to the year 1778, he had an opportunity of making many observations on the nature of the naval service there, and of ascertaining the interests of the different colonies,

¹ His letters relative to the squadron were not always approved by the officers of the fleet. *Cf. ante*, vol. i. p. 103.

which he committed to writing, and, by means of Sir Charles Middleton, had them communicated to the several admirals commanding on that station during the late war, who, and particularly Lord Rodney, expressed themselves obliged to him for them. These he drew up at full length and has since presented them to Lord Howe, to be laid up in the admiralty office, for the information of those who may command there on future occasions of service ; for which his lordship sent him a letter of thanks.

Having been appointed chaplain to Admiral Barrington's ship in the year 1778, he employed himself in drawing up a series of sermons adapted to the circumstances of the royal navy, part of which have been published, and well received, and part yet remain in manuscript, for want of health and time to prepare them for the press.

In the year 1781 he left the West Indies, and, by the friendship of Sir Charles Middleton, is now settled at Teston, in Kent. How his time has been since employed in the public service, is best known to that gentleman, and will no doubt be explained by him ; but this, in general, may be said : that for upwards of thirty years, he has been voluntarily, and without prospect of reward, in a manner constantly employed for the public good ; that he has done everything in his power, by his writings, to suggest and introduce method, manners, and religion, into the royal navy ; that he has been the means of awakening the public attention to that reproach to humanity, West Indian slavery ; and it might also be added that when, seventeen years ago, the colony of St. Christopher was violently convulsed, and the superintending power of the mother country obstinately combated, he, by his active endeavours, was one main instrument of preserving that power unimpaired.

After all, being praised, and his conduct approved of, this gentleman remains in narrow circumstances, with a family and numerous helpless relations to provide for.

CAPTAIN MACBRIDE¹ TO MIDDLETON

[*Holograph.*]

Plympton. 18th August, 1787.

Dear Sir,—I was favoured with your letter on my return from Cherbourg. I am much obliged by your kind intentions, should opportunity or the times render it practicable.

I have been very much gratified as well as surprised at the great undertaking I have just visited. It is worthy a great and powerful nation. If zeal and exertion can insure success, they have every right and reason to expect it. You have no doubt seen the plans. At present there are thirteen cones placed and five more on the stocks ; two are finished, the other three nearly so ; it is not intended to launch any of them till next year—May or June, as the weather may best offer. The only risk they run is a gale of wind coming on before they can be sufficiently filled to steady them. In the prosecution of the work, only two have failed from that cause. It requires forty-five days fine weather to fill one completely. When you consider that those thirteen cones have been placed in three years ; that they have filled between them with stones, so as to pass

¹ Captain Macbride, a captain of 1765, and a rear-admiral of 1793, served continuously through the Revolutionary War and died in 1800. He was at first entered on the list of the navy as McBride ; but wrote (2nd December, 1768) to the Secretary of the Admiralty explaining that his name had been so written by an error of a clerk ; and as an old relation whom it was ' necessary to please ' laid great stress on its being written Macbride, he begged that it might be altered accordingly.

between several at low water, and that, in nine fathoms water, it is wonderful ; but a view of the manner in which they proceed—having, they say and I believe, near about ten thousand men at work, that between four and five hundred stone lighters are constantly at work, carrying stones when the tide suits from the basin and outer harbour, and at low water from other quarries on the coast—it is easily accounted for.

The naval part is conducted by Monsieur La Bretonnière, a captain in the navy, who has a broad pennant on board a frigate ; the Triton, an old 64-gun ship, has lain most of the winter under the cones and has found it a good roadstead ; as they fill up, it of course will become better. The Brillant, of the same force, arrived whilst I was there. Those ships receive the working parties from the cones as well as try the effect of them. The inner harbour is much enlarged, and a new basin partly finished ; but by the plan it is to be very considerably enlarged, for which the ground is very well calculated ; when completed it will contain many hundred sail, whose draught of water does not exceed eighteen feet.

The road is to be defended by three very strong principal works : Fort Royal, on Isle Pelée on the east, Fort Artois (two tier of guns), the middle entrance ; and Fort Querqueville, the north-west entrance. I was told by one of the officers who accompanied me that a little to the westward of Querqueville there is an inlet of the sea, very narrow at the entrance, 24 feet at low water ; when in, it is spacious and capable of being made more so, with depth sufficient for line-of-battle ships, so as to contain forty sail of the line, which makes up their grand project. On the whole it is a wonderful undertaking ; in my opinion it will answer ; for if

a work of this kind is to be annoyed, it is more likely to be so when first put down than afterwards ; because it certainly acquires stability from time.¹ It will when completed be a formidable establishment. They have found out, or at least think so, that the work would have been better without cones, and that an artificial ledge of rocks would have been formed without them, and so says Mr. Smeaton.

Why not enclose Plymouth Sound from Statten Heights? It was an idea of the late Sir Charles Knowles, but I believe beyond the conception of our farthing-candle admiralty.

Although they were civil, there appeared much reserve at bottom. I brought three plates of the road and views of the works with me. You will be tired with this long epistle unless you have had much the same account before. When I have the pleasure of seeing you, will produce the plates. I have a strong opinion it will not be long before they exclude strangers from seeing the works ; my leave was only one day.

Thanks for the puppy. I will write my friend Lieutenant Mackintosh of the marines. When opportunity offers I wish you could appoint Laurence Bear to a ship as cook ; he lost his leg with the late Captain Hawker in the Iris ; was a good man, and left a kind of legacy, or rather incumbrance, on the widow.

Yours, most obediently and sincerely,
JOHN MACBRIDE.

¹ A more detailed account of this attempt is given by Lacour-Gayet, ii. 559 *sq.*, with a reference to Cessart, *Description des travaux hydrauliques*. Two years after the date of this letter the whole work was swept away in a gale.

MIDDLETON TO WILLIAM PITT

[*Rough draft. Endorsed.*]

[23rd September, 1787.]

Sir,—In consequence of a summons from Lord Howe, I came to town this morning and was informed by his lordship that a promotion of flags was to take place immediately and which would include several captains junior to me on the list. He therefore wished to know my determination as to continuance in office on being appointed an admiral. His lordship at the same time behaved to me in the most handsome manner, and declared it would have been his wish to have connected the flag with the comptrollership, but that he knew it would give offence to the service, and on that account became impracticable.

It was impossible for me to hesitate one moment on the choice, as declining the flag would have been sacrificing the object of 40 years' service. At the same time, when I reflect on the circumstances accompanying the alternative, and that my predecessors—Mr. Mostyn,¹ Sir Charles Saunders and Sir Hugh Palliser²—were favoured with marks of his Majesty's approbation on leaving the office, I cannot but feel sensibly mortified; for though I am far from arrogating any superior merit, yet I would fain flatter myself that the labour of more than nine years, in which the most disinterested and unwearied zeal for his Majesty's service has been indefatigably exerted, would not fail of receiving as distinguished marks of approbation as each of them were honoured with. If the flag as my right had

¹ Savage Mostyn; Moysten in the MS.

² It is difficult to see the point of the argument. Each of these resigned the office of comptroller to accept his flag; which was exactly what Middleton did not want to do, and did not do.

been given to me in addition to the office, I should with pleasure have continued in it till the issue of the present armament¹ had been decided and the report of the commission of inquiry carried into execution, and which, from the experience I have had, would I think have been found beneficial to the public. It appears to me that Lord Howe, from what he said, would have acquiesced in such an arrangement if the measure was to originate with his Majesty and the cabinet, and in such case no captain would have ventured to find fault with it. But to be superseded in such an office as this, without the least mark of approbation, is contrary to the usage of a long series of years, is unexpected, and very humiliating. I flatter myself however that you will do me the justice to believe that in this representation I am actuated by the best principles. What I have said has been in justice to my own feelings and from a conviction that the comptroller-ship of the navy would, under its present imperfect circumstance, be more properly placed in the hands of an admiral than in any inferior officer; and in this opinion I am confident the commission of inquiry will agree.

I cannot conclude without expressing my entire satisfaction in the very cordial and handsome reception I met with from Lord Howe; and, on that account, should be very sorry if he thought me in any degree discontented at what has happened.

¹ The Dutch armament.

*VICE-ADMIRAL GRAVES¹ TO
MIDDLETON*

Powerful : Hamoaze.

8th October, 1787.

Sir,—I was very happy to see your name still remain at the head of the navy board, notwithstanding the late promotion to your flag. If it does not create a precedent, it restores a good one which was become obsolete ; and I hope a useful precedent will now be established by making the sea officers the majority of the navy board. My late application for the removal of my surgeon to where my flag is to be worn would have been made to yourself, had I known of your continuing to preside at the board.

I have the honour to be . . .

THOMAS GRAVES.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

[? end of September 1787.]

As I foresee a very great and early demand for transports in case of hostilities, and that the dock-yards will not be able to go deep into repairs till the fleet is in service, it is submitted whether it might not be advisable to take as many ships from the ordinary as cannot soon come under repair and employ them as transports.

What occurs to me as necessary will be to strengthen them with top riders, to give them very light masts and yards, and to put a few guns only on the midship part of their frames. If this idea is followed up, and five or six of the 40-gun ships that

¹ Commander-in-Chief in 1781 on the N. American station. Afterwards Lord Graves.

have been longest repaired are fitted as transports, it would, at the expense of 1200 seamen and landmen, give a ready command of transports capable of carrying 5000 men to the West Indies or any other part of the world, and be superior in every point of view to any ships that can be hired for this purpose.

If six 40-gun ships in good condition are applied to this purpose, there will remain about sixteen for convoys, &c. ; and should it be found expedient to recall them at a short notice, the ships above mentioned will be coming forward to replace them. I have sounded the cabin contractor on this subject, and he will undertake fitting ships at any port. The rigging contractor is equally ready on his part.

If the measure is adopted, I should propose Captain Teer, our agent at Deptford, or Captain Parry at Portsmouth, to overlook the fitting, as they will be able, from their experience and judgment in these matters, to find storage for some hundred more men in such an equipment than could be done under the direction of the dockyard officers or any other person not conversant in such business.

Since writing the above, I have been at the admiralty, and find Lord Howe in a great measure acquiesces to the converting some 40-gun ships into transports ; but there is a drag still upon the wheel, and which I shall endeavour to remove to-morrow.

I trust I have now procured 4000 tons of shipping in the river, and which will be ready at the time appointed, but I hope to speak more positively in a few days.

27th September [1787].

As a very large number of transports ought to be ready to act when war is determined on, and no transportation of troops and provisions can take

place without such preparation, it is suggested that the river Thames will at no time be able to produce a sufficient quantity for offensive operations.

The smallest possible number for any service in the common way will require at least six weeks to complete them after they are hired by the navy board. I would therefore propose losing no time, after the measure is thought equal to the expense, in taking up publicly 10 or 12,000 tons of shipping for this purpose:—2000 tons to rendezvous at Sheerness; 8000 at Spithead and 2000 at Plymouth; to be moved eastward or westward, as occasion may require.

The admiralty order to the navy office should specify no particular quantity, as such information will always enhance the price and create speculations, which are always to be avoided in military preparations. The quantity to be taken up should be lodged with the comptroller, without coming officially through any office, and the earliest notice possible given him of every intended service. By this means the public will always be kept ignorant of the extent of your armaments, and much unnecessary expense saved. The same idea will apply to every kind of preparation for secret service; and as success in a great measure depends on secrecy and early preparation, I cannot repeat too often the necessity of early information to the person who is to be entrusted with the execution.

The objection to taking up transports at an early period is expense; but I cannot see how it is possible to strike a sudden stroke without such preparation.

Lord Howe observed that he should want the 40-gun ships for convoys; but I have, by my plan, left him no less than 16 for that service, and which is more than double the number we were possessed

of at the commencement of the last war. I trust, too, Sir, that if the Dutch act with us, that the convoys will be entrusted to their heavy sailing ships under an English senior officer, and that our more active ones will be left entirely free for offensive operations. This arrangement will have many good effects. It will give full scope for active measures on our part ; it will leave our cruising force in your hands, to cover attacks and make us superior in every part of the world.

To remove, however, his lordship's doubts, I have proposed another plan, and which I shall annex. No fleet, however strong, can act to advantage without transports of various descriptions, and they must be got ready in time. What I propose may sometimes appear bold and expensive, but I have been long used to look at every part of the service, and experience in office, with a tolerable share of professional skill has, of course, made me ready at expedient and quick in deciding. I have seen, too, with pleasure, that you are aware of the good consequences of being prepared against probable events, and of that essential distinction—that being liberal of the public money for such purposes is the best economy. You may rely on me, Sir, for proposing nothing in my way that is not consistent with this plan ; and if my suggestions should at any time appear hazardous, I trust you will rather impute them to many years' experience in office than to rashness.

You are naturally aware, Sir, that whatever may be necessary for strengthening Gibraltar in point of provisions and stores may be done at no risk now ; but if left to war, will become difficult, and unnecessarily divert a great part of our naval force, which may be more properly employed.

SIR GEORGE YONGE¹ TO MIDDLETON

[Holograph.]

War Office. 30th September, 1787.

Sir,—Having received directions to convey the 17th regiment of foot from Chatham, and the 55th from Deal and Dover, by the most expeditious means to Portsmouth, in order to their being ready for foreign service, I should be much obliged to you for your sentiments whether there is any likelihood of procuring transports in the river which might take up these regiments, and also of knowing how soon, by such conveyance, they might be likely, wind and weather permitting, to reach Portsmouth, in order that it may be submitted to government either to send them in the transports, or to march them by land.

As the time presses very much I should be much obliged to you for the favour of an answer as soon as possible, indeed I should wish for the favour of your sentiments by the bearer, who will bring it to me.

I have the honour to be

GEORGE YONGE.

PITT TO MIDDLETON

[Holograph.]

Downing Street. 30th September, 1787.

Dear Sir,—It seems desirable that the 35th regiment, which is now at Newcastle, consisting of 337 effectives, should be brought as speedily as possible to Portsmouth, and the 40th, which is at Liverpool (325 effectives) to Plymouth. The shortest way will probably be to bring them by sea, and vessels may of course be had at either of those places.

¹ Secretary for War.

I wish to know whether the navy board has correspondence at those places, and can take measures for procuring the vessels, or whether it must be left to the commanding officers of the regiments to get them as they can. If you can give orders, be so good [as] to send your letters to me, I will take care they shall be forwarded with Sir George Yonge's order from the war office.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Sunday [30th September], 1787.

As the passage from Liverpool to Plymouth is a very uncertain one and requires different winds to accomplish it, I would by no means expose the men to the inconveniences that may arise from their being kept at sea in shipping unprovided with bedding and provisions, and improperly fitted. I would therefore propose the 40th being marched over land.

If the 35th is wanted in great haste and cannot wait for our river transports, the commanding officer may have directions to procure them passage¹ on the spot; but as this expedient may prove at best precarious, and the seamen are dispersed, for² the issuing of press warrants, I would advise immediate orders by express being sent from the admiralty to the cruisers on the north coast, the Nore, and the Downs to proceed to Newcastle without loss of time and take on board the 35th regiment and carry it to Portsmouth,³ and proceed afterwards to their proper stations if necessary. Three frigates of 32 guns are equal to this service, or that amount

¹ The draft has 'in colliers.'

² *Sc.* on account of.

³ The word is omitted in the letter, and is filled in from the draft.

in sloops and cutters. These vessels have provisions and water on board—they have spare sails for the soldiers to lay in, and no inconvenience or risk whatever can attend this mode of conveyance. It is the most expeditious one I can point out, and the present juncture favours it.

The navy board never take up ships at the outports without great caution, and sending officers to them. It is a work of great time, and we always prefer the ships coming to our own ports, where at last they must be surveyed and equipped with water casks, provisions, &c. &c.

[¹ The king's ships are always the most expeditious way of moving troops when other services will admit of it, and the earlier it is adopted the better.]

[? 5th October, 1787.]

I have agreed for 6000 tons of transports to be got immediately ready, and Commissioner Cherry of the victualling office has been privately desired to have six weeks' provisions for 2500 men ready to ship at a moment's notice, and six months' provisions for the same number of men to follow it.

The first set will, I trust, be ready to leave Deptford by Tuesday or Wednesday next, when they shall fall down to the Hope under their own colours, and an agent be provided to join them there on the shortest notice. If it is determined to send troops abroad as soon as those for home service sail, I would propose fitting them with cabins as soon as they reach Deptford, without waiting for sheeting, and take the damage they may sustain from the worm upon ourselves; for otherwise, the sudden act of sheeting will immediately discover the object. If time will admit, the first set may be properly fitted on their return from service. You

¹ Added from the draft.

see, Sir, in order to preserve secrecy and despatch, how necessary it is to have a set of transports always belonging to government in readiness. If the idea of using 40-gun ships in this is adopted, they ought to be selected without loss of time, and equipped. If wanted for cruisers they may be soon changed. I mention this early, because an offensive war is always a defensive one, and an early stroke struck will carry its weight throughout the war.

Complete sets of artillery for large and small expeditions, with every necessary accompaniment, should be lodged at Portsmouth and Plymouth, and flat-bottomed boats in readiness there. It is not to be believed how much time was lost in the last war by waiting for these articles from the river, nor the information that got abroad and even reached our enemies by preparations that ought to have been always ready. If these circumstances are attended to, your expeditions will go off silently and probably prove successful; if delayed till the moment, it cannot be expected.

The victualling of the army must, as usual, be carried on from Cowes for the dry, and Cork for the wet provisions: for the want of having storehouses at Cove¹ belonging to the public, the expense and delay in the last war were inconceivable. I had an island² surveyed since the peace for this service, and it may either be leased or purchased at an easy rate. If war is expected, I would propose building store houses on this spot and removing the naval arsenal from Kinsale to it. It will make an excellent depot for army provisions and naval stores. It is a question whether it might not be proper to make

¹ Cove, or, in full, Cove of Cork. The name was changed to Queenstown on the occasion of the visit of Queen Victoria in 1849.

² Haulbowline, see *post*, p. 276.

immediate preparations at this place to prevent salt provisions being provided for France and Spain. Ireland too is a great revenue for men. Can no legal method be used to hinder their entering into the service of foreign powers, and encouraging Danes, Dutch, and Swedes to enter into ours?

The impress service must be particularly attended to, to make it effective. The plan should be always prepared in peace, the officers named, and press warrants lodged at the several ports and rendezvous. It is incredible how this business gets wind, and how ineffectual it proves if preparations are delayed till the moment of execution.

The last thing generally settled in the course of war is a cartel for the exchange of prisoners, by which omission numbers of men are lost. The French and Spaniards have generally made a barbarous use of this inattention on our part. It should be early attended to, not only in justice to our seamen, but would encourage men to engage in the service and give the minister great credit.

West Indies

If this country be the first object and which is very necessary, Barbados, as a windward station, Dominica, for wooding and watering the king's ships, and Antigua as a naval arsenal, are the first to be made secure amongst the Windward Islands. If an attack is meant, St. Lucia ought to be early considered, and Martinique next in strength. By strength I mean at least 15,000 men. If this island falls, all the rest will follow; Guadeloupe is next in consequence and will require 10,000. It is an island of great value and very considerable trade. Tobago is of no great consequence in value, but laying to windward of Grenada and on a parallel with

Barbados, will be very troublesome in privateers. if not seized. I should suppose 1000 men equal to this conquest. St. Lucia will require at least 3000 and a proper naval force to prevent supplies for Martinique, which may otherwise be easily run in.

Whatever operations are carried on amongst these islands, they will need a strong naval support. They lay wide, they are small and defenceless, and have no places of strength to enable them to stand a siege. The French islands are the direct contrary to all this. I speak from experience, having served five years in a former war amongst them, and with such success against their privateers that the island of Barbados voted me a most superb sword. The care of these islands should be committed to officers of distinguished character, and not to men of broke fortunes, ignorant of the service ; or to men interested in the islands, who may prefer the saving an internal tax that falls on their property to the defence of the colony.

If Mr. Pitt wishes for good and disinterested information concerning these islands, Sir Charles Middleton would recommend the Rev. Mr. Ramsay to his notice. Lord Sackville availed himself of this gentleman's knowledge and integrity in the last war, and constantly corresponded with him.

A plan should be formed for the protection of our home and foreign trade, and cruisers stationed accordingly. The Channel squadron must be kept strong or weak, as circumstances may arise ; but foreign expeditions must never be sacrificed to this mistaken object if you mean to destroy the enemies' fleet. It was at least five or six times in our power to do so in the last war ; but an insufficient Western squadron was always the object, and we failed in every part of the world in consequence of supporting it. Proper admirals should be appointed to the

foreign stations, an unexceptionable one to the Western squadron, and methodical and firm men at the ports.

Some measures should be taken to prevent prizes acting to the injury of the service. It is a great temptation to divert ships from their proper duty, and occasioned much expense and disappointment in the last war.

The Americans having no trade and lying invitingly in the way of our West India ships, will use any pretence, and procure hostile commissions for fitting out privateers, and every unprincipled seaman, and particularly Irish, will flock to them to be employed against us. Our enemies' privateers will also frequent this coast very much and refit in its ports. Care therefore should be taken not to permit naval or other warlike stores to be shipped to our own colonies, except with bonds, and under convoy, and by people whose principles and loyalty are known and who will answer for the conduct of their ship masters.

As a precedent was wanted for flag officers serving as comptrollers of the navy, I enclose two just extracted from the comptroller's office, and shall deliver a copy to Lord Howe to-morrow.

MIDDLETON TO LORD HOWE

[*Rough draft.*]

6th October, 1787.

I was in time for the post yesterday to acquaint Mr. Martin of the necessity of hastening the frigates as well as the line-of-battle ships, and that no man, on any account, must be taken from either for the 40-gun ships. I shall also write to the builder by this post, that it is expected that both these classes of ships are ready by the time

reported to the navy board. While on this subject, I have to assure your lordship that I have no favourite object, but to forward every part of the service and to give a preference to that which is ordered. It was hinted to me that troops might be sent to the West Indies at a moment's notice, and my own intimate knowledge of the islands suggesting to me what would be first attempted, this induced me to give every possible despatch to the coppered transports, taking it for granted they might, if necessary, proceed singly and without convoy, before a war was declared, and be in time to set aside any *coup de main* that might be intended on Dominica or English Harbour. Having now caught your lordship's idea that they must be supported by convoy, I flatter myself they may be ready, in a common way, before the ships in hand can get manned. It is providing flat boats, top-masts, yards, boats and caulking that require the assistance of the yard artificers, and which I think the carpenters of the ships ready for sea would forward very much if they could be spared. In the former war they were employed in this way under the directions of the port admiral, who ordered them on board at his own discretion, and I never remember an instance of them being left behind when the ships were ordered to sea. Of this expedient, however, your lordship is the best judge.

Your lordship mentioned to me on Thursday your intention of adding more sea assistance to the navy board. It never was more required than in the present moment of preparation, and I do assure your lordship, upon the experience of this office in a very intricate war, I am of opinion that no person, however otherwise qualified, except a seaman, is capable of providing stores for ships in commission and on the foreign stations to advantage. I am

extremely sorry to differ from your lordship on this subject, but I have seen so much misapplication of stores and so much disappointment, from this business being left to an office whose branch is altogether in another line, that I should not speak the truth if I did not endeavour to impress it on your lordship ; and it was owing to this knowledge that the stations were so fully supplied in the last war, and no complaints subsisted on that head. The surveyor's own branch is fully sufficient to occupy the attention and time of the ablest man that ever filled the office ; and the one I am in is equally so ; but I should feel myself very unworthy of filling it, if I hesitated one moment in receiving any assistance that might be offered me in executing it. I must therefore request of your lordship to indulge my opinion in the present moment, and pass by the ceremony of a patent, so that we may have the immediate assistance that is wanted ; and for this additional reason, that any misapplication of cordage, in the present scarcity of hemp, might prove fatal to the operations of the fleet. For this reason we shall be obliged to request the admiralty to caution the captains on the good husbandry of their stores, and to submit to your lordship's judgment the propriety of the ships on home service being reduced one cable, till our next year's supply of hemp is received. They are now allowed seven cables each.

I forgot yesterday to inform your lordship that Mr. Pitt wishes four gun-boats to be taken in hand at present and the other six in succession.

As soon as the topmasts are through the caps of the first two 40-gun ships, it will be useful to get their officers and men on board to take in their water and provisions and bend their sails. I mention that time as not interfering with the riggers

and cabin builders. The complement of men and number of guns shall be transmitted to your lordship early in the week.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

3 o'clock, 6th October, 1787.

I have informed Lord Howe of the present state of the transport 40-gun ships, and that the Chichester and Gorgon will be ready to commission on Tuesday next. I have also desired him to inform the Duke of Richmond that the Gorgon has neither carriages nor guns, and that the Chichester's upper deck carriages are making. The Dover's guns are wanting and carriages making. There are other ship's guns of this class ready; but the storekeeper cannot substitute them without the duke's orders, even if the decks would admit of it; and says he has had no orders whatever relative to these ships.

I would submit therefore the urgent necessity of requesting his grace's immediate order, without waiting for official application, that the guns &c. may be supplied when demanded, and that one ship's guns may be substituted for another when found necessary. The 40-gun ships being all of one construction, I should hope the decks will do with very little or no alteration.

It is intended to leave behind 4 guns on the upper deck, all the quarter-deck guns and the fore-castle guns except two.

Navy Office. 8th October, 1787.

Four thousand tons of transport shipping are now falling down to the Hope, and their provisions and water will follow to-morrow morning. I have

directed a preference to be given to as many sheeted¹ ships as will carry 1500 troops, and beds to be put on board for that number as soon as the cabins are completed. These ships, added to the king's ships who may accompany them, will carry 2000 men; but to make it still easier, I will endeavour to add another ship. If this plan should be adopted, the coppered transports with one line-of-battle ship will be more than sufficient for carrying the regiments from Cork, and, by the quickness of their sailing, will be in the West Indies before those who sail under convoy from Spithead. This method appears to me the best for securing a speedy arrival of one or other of these corps, and there appears very little risk either way.

It must be, however, premised that a positive order must be given to me to employ two gangs of shipwrights on the 40-gun ships, as it will be totally impossible to bring them forward in time without that number; and, to obviate all difficulties, we have this day sent to Portsmouth two gangs of shipwrights from Deptford, and one from Woolwich.

The Cork regiments, if ready for embarkation when the coppered transports arrive, and who ought to sail with sealed orders, will require no other convoy than the line-of-battle ship who accompanies them, as they are out of the way of Brest; and I will venture to say these six 40-gun ships will do more substantial service in case of war than 40 transports of the common construction hired from the merchants.

By a letter just received from our agent at Quebec, dated 4th September, it appears that all our transports at that port were ready for sea on the 27th of August. Lord Dorchester directed them

¹ *Sz.* with copper.

to be kept in constant readiness as the troops were not ready for embarking. This delay will be best unriddled by the secretary at war.

If the river transports get to Spithead before the coppered ones are ready, I conclude the ships who are to accompany them will be preparing. The very moment I can name a time for their sailing, it shall be communicated.

Saturday night, 13th October, 1787.

As I see the necessity of giving despatch to the judicious measures you have adopted, and am fearful of delay on our part, I have sent my own servant, in a private way, with a letter to Lord Hood, to explain to his lordship how necessary it was to have the Chichester ready for Thursday night, for embarking her share of the troops; and suggested with what facility two sets of men might work night and day, without much fatigue to themselves, in getting her ready. I have desired his lordship to use my name with the dockyard and victualling, so that every part might co-operate; and have purposely avoided writing to the agent till Monday, to prevent giving alarm to the admiralty, who might otherwise be jealous of what is passing between Lord Hood and me, though absolutely necessary for the purpose of getting this ship ready. It will be necessary to apprise the Duke of Richmond of what is going on, that the ordnance officers at Portsmouth may be prepared at a moment's notice, to send off the guns and powder. By these means I have no doubt but the Chichester may be ready by Thursday night.

MIDDLETON TO LORD INCHQUIN

[Autograph draft.]

9th October, 1787.

My Lord,—The present preparation for war has again suggested to me the utility of having some spot near the Cove of Cork for making an establishment when it shall be found necessary for depositing the army provisions. When I last spoke to your lordship on this subject, Spike Island presented itself as the best calculated for this purpose; but there are objections in point of depth of water that did not then occur to me. Haulbowline Island, which is not subject to this objection and lays higher up the harbour, appears to me the most eligible spot. I had it examined three years since, and as it cannot from the situation [&] nature of it be very beneficial to your lordship in its present state, I would propose purchasing it on the part of government, if your lordship would enable me to do so by letting them have it at a reasonable amount for a term of years, or selling the fee simple. If your lordship will honour me with an explicit answer on this head, I will immediately take measures to bring it about.

LORD INCHQUIN TO MIDDLETON

[Holograph.]

Clifden. 14th October, 1787.

Sir,—I had the favour of your letter yesterday relative to Haulbowline Island, and as my wishes ever have been to forward the interest to government of these kingdoms, I cannot hesitate [in expressing] the great satisfaction it gives me, by any means in my powers, to serve it. I therefore consent to the immediate sale of the island to government for whatever the value of it shall be reported to you to be, by any person you shall appoint to value it.

A yard or storehouse for masts, anchors, and other naval stores was much wanted there the two last wars, upon several occasions ; some urgent ones. That at Kinsale is inconvenient and too much out of the way for the fleet and ships, both outward and homeward bound. The delay of sending there has been often attended with great loss and inconvenience.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,
INCHIQUIN.

Autograph Minute by Middleton on the dorse

Answered : That I felt myself much obliged by his lordship's confidence ; but, as I should be sorry to deal with him in a less liberal way, on the part of the public, than his offer deserves, it would be more satisfactory to me if each party named an appraiser. When that was done, and the value transmitted to his lordship and me, I should be very happy to promote the purchase.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

15th October, 1787.

The enclosed ¹ will inform you that the measure you have adopted will be carried into execution, and that orders may be given accordingly. The camp equipage must be divided, and our agent, Captain Parry, is fully master of the subject.

What I meant concerning the danger that Dominica and St. Vincent were in, more than the other islands, proceeds not less from their situation, than their having a French interest prevailing in

¹ Missing.

them amongst the negroes and Indians. Our other islands will be secure for a superior fleet, with a very little assistance from the military ; but it is necessary that the person commanding the squadron should be perfect master of the station, and the currents that prevail amongst the islands, so as to preserve a proper station for giving relief to them if attacked, and that the governor of each should have constant information of his movements that he may know where to apply in case of need.

5th November, 1787.

Coppered Transports¹

Chichester	Sheerness
Gorgon	Actæon
Dover	Endymion

Each of these ships will carry 450 soldiers, exclusive of seamen, with five months' provisions and four months' water, on the most distant services.

If the service is hard pressed for transports, or the object important, 600 soldiers may be carried in each ship as far as Gibraltar or the West India Islands, and even 800 for expeditions of ten or fourteen days.

It would be very expedient also to keep the above ships fitted as they now are, in a state of ordinary ; as they may, in conjunction with the ships of war, be the means of striking an early blow on the commencement of a future war ; whereas it is impossible to be done with hired transports. Those lately taken up required five weeks fitting ; and if hired under the usual forms of office, would have taken up ten or twelve.

The four gun-boats for Gibraltar will be completed in three weeks. Sir Roger Curtis's ideas on

¹ 44-gun ships.

this subject shall be laid before Mr. Pitt, the first leisure opportunity. I am, however, of opinion that two men, making in all six, will be sufficient to be kept in garrison in time of peace. They will be packed up in frame, and even in that state will require much room to stow them.

P.S.—I could wish to know as soon as convenient if any of the hired transports, and what number, could be spared, as I would endeavour to get the owners to receive them back with compensation.

MEMORANDUM

[*Endorsed*: Sent Mr. Rose, 18th November, 1787, in consequence of Mr. Pitt's intentions on that head.]

[*Autograph copy*.]

Suggestions on intended naval encouragement, grounded on justice, and consequently popular.

Employment

Instead of making any allowance to officers who stepped forward on the present occasion, I would propose an option of employment for three years, as a more substantial benefit and bringing no additional expense on the public; the midshipmen to be continued in the service, and not turned adrift as has been usual on such occasions. All ships (guardships excepted) and cruising vessels to be allowed a double establishment of midshipmen, one half of which to be confined to such young men as have passed their examination for lieutenants. The benefits arising to the public from this measure will be great and many; the expense will never appear, as it will be sunk in the wages, and is trifling in amount.

Promotion

There were several midshipmen who, from a scarcity in that line, had been made lieutenants in the last war, and, after serving several years as such, were turned adrift on the peace. This was a very heavy disappointment to themselves, and in some instances injurious to the service. I would propose a consideration of such claims, and to include a proportion of them in each promotion that may take place during the peace. Also of such officers and midshipmen who had distinguished themselves by extraordinary acts of service, and from want of opportunity were not promoted in the war. I do not mention first lieutenants to admirals who have hoisted their flags on the present armament, because I think it subject to objection of partiality, and which should always be kept out of sight in public service. As far as the commander-in-chief, it appears very proper.

*MEMORIAL ON THE SUPPLYING OF
THE NAVY WITH SEAMEN¹*

November, 1787.

The French have attended so particularly to the raising of a navy, and our navy has been so greatly increased to keep pace with it, that our commerce is become inadequate to the demand of men to man it. The impress service, every new rupture turns out less productive ; and everybody sees the hardship of forcing men into the service, without proposing

¹ This paper, in the handwriting of Ramsay, and initialled by him, appears, from the style, to be actually his, though probably after consultation with Middleton. It seems, however, to want the restraint of Middleton's practical experience.

a method to render it unnecessary. Therefore it will be prudent, while the difficulties attending the late armament,¹ and the danger of a general war, from which we are just escaped, are strong before us, to embrace the present leisure, for bringing into use some plan for securing such a supply of men as may bring into speedy service that numerous fleet which now fills our ports. Perhaps no unexceptionable scheme can be proposed, and that unforeseen objections may be discovered on carrying even the best into execution. Still, if the necessity be acknowledged, some one should be enacted, and a standing committee may be appointed to receive and digest all proposed improvements. The present memorial shall be short, and coming from one acquainted with the service, who has turned his mind to the subject, his very mistakes may point to something proper and practicable.

The strength of nations is comparative. To lessen a rival's force increases our own. In this view, we push to an indiscreet length a horrid trade which increases the commerce of France, and of consequence her navy, by the destruction of our seamen in a precarious and, in general, a losing trade. It is well known that a profitable trade might be opened with Africa by a barter of commodities which would employ shipping, raise seamen, and add wealth to the kingdom. Instead of this, our present African trade is the commerce of slaves, which destroys our seamen by thousands, makes bankrupts of those employed in it,² and is chiefly applied to the improvement of the French sugar colonies which are the

¹ The Dutch armament.

² This is contradicted by the extraordinary prosperity of Liverpool in the 18th century. Cf. Gomer Williams, *The Liverpool Privateers, with an Account of the Liverpool Slave Trade*, pp. 594-608, where it is shown that the average profit on the money engaged in the trade during the years 1783-93, was over 30 per cent.

best nursery of their navy. It is to be remarked, that through the difficulty of now obtaining slaves in Africa, their price is so enhanced in the West Indies that extreme necessity alone forces our own planters to purchase them, so that the current of the trade is directed to the French and other foreign markets; and as the French colonies, especially Hispaniola, are inexhaustible, every importation of slaves by our traders adds to their importance. If it be said, that on our abandoning of the trade, the French will extend theirs, I deny it. They want that wealth and persevering spirit which have enabled our traders to carry it to its present length.¹

Were they to attempt it, it would be in a way so much more expensive than even ours, as would deprive them of the advantages, which we possess. It is a fact that slaves are smuggled into Hispaniola from Jamaica 12 per cent. cheaper than the French import them from Africa. Even a great proportion of what they bring from Africa are bought from our brokers on the coast. If it be asked how can the French afford high prices for slaves better than our planters, I answer, they live more on their property, and more like farmers than our planters, and therefore can afford better to pay for them.

Perhaps the only other circumstance in which we can interfere is to keep the French strictly to the articles respecting the Newfoundland fisheries, and encourage our own to enable us to command the fish markets. This, by the advantage of our Newfoundland settlements, might easily be accomplished; their fisheries being chiefly advantageous as raising seamen. The first thing to be attended to on our side is the encouragement of the Northern fisheries.

¹ But 'that wealth' was—by the Liverpool merchants, who at this date had a practical monopoly of the trade—made almost entirely out of it.

This is too great an object to be trusted to voluntary subscriptions. Towns have been marked out for carrying on the fisheries. May not premiums be offered for houses built in them and inhabited by fishermen within three, five or seven years? Government also should cut through the peninsula of Kintyre, laying only a duty on the navigation sufficient to support the locks. 50,000 men may be employed in the fisheries. When a war breaks out, the fisheries may be in part suspended, and all the men below a certain age may be taken into the service. The savings in the impress service, with part of their wages transmitted, would support their families in their absence.

The state of our finances requires every possible help to be drawn from private wealth, and the circumstances of trade. Our merchant ships generally employ too few men.¹ In the French ships, the proportion is perhaps double. This gives them an advantage in arming. Why may we not fix the least number that each ship, according to her tonnage and trade, should carry, taking into account the despatch and security of commerce, and the manning of the navy?

Every man's age, on his going to sea, should be registered, and none under twenty, at the time of passing the act, should be advanced to be master or mate of a merchant ship exceeding a certain tonnage, till he had served (suppose 12 months) in the navy, and passed an examination. The service should be open to such men, and they should have their discharge freely when the time was expired. While in the navy, they should be made conversant in every

¹ G. Williams, *op. cit.*, pp. 470-71, shows clearly enough that it was the severe economy alone that gave the Liverpool ships the advantage over their rivals from London and Bristol. Ramsay's suggestion would have left them stranded.

branch of the service, especially of gunnery and the language of signals, to know how to defend themselves and behave properly under convoy.

Ships in foreign trade or above a certain tonnage, should be obliged to carry artillery in time of peace. A navy lieutenant should be settled at each considerable port, to take account of the crews, drill them, and examine the warlike state of the ships. Each port should have a small artillery field for exercising the men in sea gunnery. Surgeons are not soon or easily raised, nor is their present situation in the navy an encouraging one. Every ship of certain tonnage, especially in foreign trade, should be obliged to carry a surgeon, who had passed an examination.

During peace, ships of war should carry double the war establishment of petty officers,¹ and each should have a schoolmaster to bring them, and, in general, every young man on board, on in navigation, piloting, gunnery and the language of signals. Ships should be continually changing their stations, with different officers, ascertaining channels, soundings, etc. An estimate should be made of the state of trade and number of seamen employed in every sea port, and a proportion should be fixed of the numbers of seamen to be called out on any emergency.

Farther, a county naval militia should be arranged in proportion to the land militia, and perhaps double their number, but should not be called out except for actual service. They should be young men from 18 to 24 years of age. When past this age they should be discharged, and the list should be filled up. The parish might give them 30s. or 40s. *per annum* as a retainer for the

¹ *S.* midshipmen.

service, and on requisition they should be ready to repair to the nearest naval port.

Greenwich and Chelsea Hospitals are expensive establishments. A great part of the charge of both might advantageously be thrown on the poor rates. Settle these pensioners around the parishes, to act as drill sergeants, to train up men for the marine and land militia. The old sailor might teach his pupils to knot, splice and manage a rope, and the use of great guns. The Chelsea pensioner might teach both the use of small arms, and make them more than half soldiers. They both might help to maintain themselves, and have the rest made up by the parish. Perhaps the whole number would not exceed one of each to every two or three neighbouring parishes. The peace establishment of France extends to about 8,000 trained sea gunners. I never could find out a reason why our marines are not, in time of peace, taught the use of the great guns to preserve some degree of equality.

Take the foreign packets from the post-office, where they serve the purpose of expensive jobs,¹ and put them under the direction of the admiralty and navy boards, with officers and men on the naval establishment, and you would add to your peace establishment and lessen your expense. Young officers might serve in rotation, be exercised in their profession, become acquainted with different stations, and be ready for active service when called out. Hitherto, the packets have been large trading smugglers. Their tonnage should be reduced to the necessary accommodation of their crews, and that degree of stoutness which will enable them to encounter bad weather.

¹ Ramsay wrote 'expense.' The alteration is in Middleton's hand.

Our navy requires above 120,000 men. Bring this number forward in the first and second year of the war; you shorten the contest and save the public treasure. In looking forward to a state of war, attention must be paid to the slender hold we have of Ireland. It can occasionally send out 30,000 or 40,000 men, who have scarce any ordinary employment. Brought up without principle or education, having no attachment to their country, impressed with a jealousy of Great Britain, on every appearance of war they are ready to join our enemies; they recruit their brigades, they swarm on board their privateers. Every prudent step, therefore, should be taken to prevent and pre-occupy them. Why should there not be an Irish marine militia as well as an Irish army? Only let it not serve distinct, but be divided indiscriminately throughout the British navy. Were Ireland and Great Britain incorporated under one legislature, to other important advantages would be added the easy recruiting of our army and navy.

I am not anxious to obviate the objection that much of this is new, and savours of innovation. Our present state is new. We are overwhelmed with debt, we have an immense navy, and our rivals tread closely on our heels. Can it be expected that old or ordinary means will adapt themselves to these circumstances, or that we can support the present necessary establishments without throwing some part of the burden off from the public treasury? The expense here proposed to be removed to the poor rates will save to the nation at large three times the amount which it must cost, if it comes out of the exchequer. In this case, it must be raised by a number of small circuitous taxes, which going through a variety of hands comes to the consumer charged with a profit by

each. In the manner proposed, only the necessary sum is raised, and no man makes an advantage of the burden. Take it in another light. This mode crowds the preparations and exertions of five years, perhaps into less than two and thereby saves the waste and expense of tedious wars.

J. R.

FRANCIS BARING TO MIDDLETON

[*Holograph.*]

Monday, 3rd December, 1787.

Dear Sir,—I am very happy to assure you that the material part of the system which you have recommended appears so satisfactory to my brethren as well as myself, from a thorough conviction of the necessity of the case, that I am thoroughly persuaded we shall have no difficulty to adopt it. The manner in which it shall be carried into effect, with some other parts of the arrangement which, although subordinate, are undoubtedly of almost equal importance with the principle upon which the system will be founded, requires much further consideration.

After the zealous, cordial, and candid manner in which you have promoted the objects of our commission, by facilitating our inquiries by every means in your power, it would be unjust to yourself and to the public if the commissioners came to any resolution contrary to your opinion, upon any point of real importance, without having had a full and free discussion with you previous to their determination.

With great regard, I always am, dear Sir,

Your most faithful

and obedient, humble servant,

F. BARING.

*REAR-ADMIRAL J. L. GOWER
TO MIDDLETON*

[Navy Office.] 5th December, 1787.

Sir,—I called on you here this morning, but finding you was very busy, I would not interrupt you, and shall leave this note for your perusal at some more leisure minute, and tell you that I came to beg the favour of you to order Messrs. Mount and Page to send me two of the signal books,¹ etc.—which have been lately printed at the request of Vice-Admiral Lord Hood, whose permission I have obtained to ask you for them.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

J. LEVESON GOWER.

*MEMORANDA*²

[*Rough draft.*]

Sir,—In obedience to your commands, I shall briefly state what occurs to me as necessary preparations for ensuring success, as far as human means are wanting, in any future war.

¹ See *post*, p. 372.

² Though beginning in the form of a letter—probably intended for Pitt—this paper continues, through three sheets of foolscap, as rough memoranda noted down according to the drift of the writer's thoughts. The confusion is not lessened, nor are the sentences made more clear by Ramsay and Middleton having afterwards tried, alternately, to polish the language. The date is quite indeterminate. The reference to Cherbourg may, perhaps, be thought to put it later than August, 1787; that to Haulbowline later than October, and it seems not improbable that it was after the question of the Dutch armament had been settled that Pitt suggested to Middleton the advisability of drawing up a scheme for an adequate state of preparation. But we can only say with certainty that it was before July, 1789, when Ramsay died.

1.—To make such judicious arrangements in the executive offices as will give them force and action when the time arrives. The offices I mean are the admiralty, ordnance, navy and victualling boards. I include in this arrangement leading members or responsible men at the head of each; able, experienced and capable of the trusts reposed in them. If those who have the management of these offices at the beginning of a war are wanting in capacity or foresight, the best plans will be frustrated, and no minister, however great in himself, can hope for success.

2.—To complete, with every possible despatch, as many ships of the line and frigates as can be kept up by the present number of shipwrights, working no more than single days in winter, and a tide extra in summer. I state this number, under the advantages of copper, at 120 ships of the line afloat, including guardships, and 100 frigates, exclusive of what frigates may be employed on a peace establishment of 18,000 seamen. This number of ships I consider to be within our reach, if the admiralty and navy boards are properly managed, and I think the best and most economical way of accomplishing it is as follows:—To continue as many of the ships, now building, on their slips, as are in a good serviceable condition to bear it¹; to launch where they are defective, and after repairing them effectually, to set up other ships of the first and second rate in their room, and continue the whole under cover till a war makes it necessary to employ them. To desist, after this, from building any more new ships in the king's yards during the peace, and confine our strength there to repairs. This is the most speedy way of increasing our

¹ Verbal alterations have confused the sense; but as originally written, the 'serviceable' and 'defective' refer to the slips.

numbers, and the only means of replenishing our stock of timber, which at present, instead of being complete to three years', is reduced to one year's expense. This circumstance is truly alarming under the present idea of scarcity, and I see no other possibility of providing against it, but suspending our building and bringing forward or completing our repairs. If this method is pursued and an attention paid to what follows, we shall be able, in a very few years, perhaps two or three, to provide the greatest possible number of line-of-battle ships and frigates, that can be got ready in a given time, or be prudently kept up as an establishment; but if we continue building at the rate we do at present, it will be impossible to increase our quantity of timber, and if a war finds us in this condition—with our yards destitute of timber—I do not know what may be the consequence, or how we can possibly prepare against cross accidents. Our best ships, too, instead of growing better by remaining, seasoning, on the slips, will be going to decay in the water, and a large share of expense necessarily thrown upon the yards, which might be more advantageously employed in bringing others forward for the service.

3.—To commission no new ships or completely repaired ones for the peace establishment, where it is not absolutely necessary, and which will be found to be so in very few instances, as those now employed may, with proper management, be made serviceable for six or more years, under the common fitting repairs. The not attending to this measure has not only put the public to an unnecessary expense of at least £40,000 in the present year, but has thrown the dockyards of Deptford and Woolwich two years behind-hand in their repairs. It should be immediately put a stop to, and the

stationed ships gradually brought home and refitted in succession.

The 50-gun ships, too, ought to be recalled and replaced with ships of 40 guns, of which we have a great number, and which are sufficient for the stations during peace. All the larger frigates, which are very expensive in service, should be paid off and the smaller ones only employed in their room. By these means, the 50-gun ships and larger frigates, which are much wanted in the beginning of a war, will be in complete repair for service, and 2000 men, at least will be saved on the peace establishment, and the service equally well provided for. But if the present system continues, we shall be in want of these useful ships to begin hostilities with; our strength in the yards will be wasted, in the beginning of a war, in their repair; we shall be thereby prevented from building and keeping up the fleet in service, which ought to be, in the king's yards, the only object of the war. Hospital ships and ships for receiving prest men ought to be fitted at Sheerness, Portsmouth and Plymouth; four bomb vessels, at least, kept in readiness for service at the western ports, and a proportion of flat-bottomed boats, in complete order, at the different ports, for any sudden service.

4.—I have already given my opinion of guardships as at present regulated,¹ and need not repeat. If they must be kept up, let the officers and men be made useful and serviceable. One object of guardships or stationed ships should be to make the greatest possible number of officers acquainted with the various stations, and to preserve their knowledge of the service, which a very few years

¹ *Ante*, p. 165. It would seem that the memorandum there printed was, at some time, sent to Pitt.

ashore is apt to affect, and which the present regulations cannot accomplish.

5.—*Dockyards.* No expense ought to be spared in getting them, at home and abroad, put into the best state possible, and without a moment's loss of time. The magnitude of the works carrying on at Cherbourg,¹ and which, from the folly of our western members, in preventing the necessary security of our ports,² will prove a thorn in the sides of this country, evidently show what the intentions of the French are towards this country. The measures, too, that are so judiciously taken for the improvement of the revenue, the advancement of the fisheries and paying off the national debt, will, as far as my judgment goes, very much hasten a quarrel on their part, before we shall have reaped the full advantage of them. It is incredible how much our operations were cramped in the last war from a want of attention to this object in the former peace. The whole may be completed in four or five years at most, if not prevented by an injudicious economy, and by distracting our attention in the yards by the wanton change of ships.

The home yards are in a state of forwardness, and were going on under proper inspection; but the admiralty, in direct opposition to the opinion of the navy board, have discharged the civil engineer, who stood between the public and the contractor, and have thrown it into the hands of the yard officers,

¹ Cf. *ante*, pp. 255.

² The proposal to fortify the dockyards was rejected by the Speaker's casting vote—*Parliamentary History*, February 1786; but Middleton, who had spoken in favour of it, here ignores the fact that the scheme was condemned by the greater number of the naval officers on the commission, and especially by those who had served in the Channel during the very critical years 1779–82—Barrington, Milbanke, Jervis and Macbride. Cf. *Annual Register*, 1786, p. [102.

though they have been proved totally incompetent and ignorantly or wilfully guilty [of] misinterpreting the contracts in favour of the contractor, to the most corrupt waste of the public treasure. Gibraltar and Halifax will be completed in 1787; English Harbour may be so in 1788 or '89, if properly followed up. Jamaica, owing to hurricanes and want of attention in the former peace, is in a very backward state. I communicated my ideas concerning it to Lord Howe near two years past, and the navy board have just received from their surveyor proper plans for erecting storehouses and a new boundary wall at Port Royal. The estimates will follow and may probably exceed £30,000. The inconveniences that were felt in the last war for want of these storehouses, and the time that was lost by being obliged to send to Greenwich¹—which lies at an inconvenient distance—for every article of stores, makes this measure absolutely necessary. This port is of the first consequence and should be attended to. If the plan I have mentioned and some interior arrangement can be carried into execution, the whole may be completed at an expense not exceeding £6000, in five or six years, and be equal to any service that can be expected for that establishment.

6.—A necessary proportion of timber, masts, hemp, iron, copper, anchors, pitch and tar, must be kept up in the magazines, and as many articles of unperishable stores that require time in manufacturing, as will fit out the fleet and supply the usual demands for the first year of the war. By these means we shall have an opportunity of furnishing ourselves at leisure with a recruit of stores, and avoid the exorbitant demands of the contractor, which had advanced beyond every

¹ On the north side of the harbour, about a mile west of Kingston, and between 3 and 4 miles by boat from the dockyard.

degree of probability in the last war, from the tardiness of the navy payments ; and could never be reduced, because the public necessity and their large demand enabled the merchant to set his own value.

On the first idea of hostilities, as many transports should be purchased, fitted and coppered as will convey 8000 men and their provisions to any part of the world. By this early preparation, our own settlements may be put in a state of security, and one or more expeditions may be undertaken at the very best period for success, and without danger of discovery ; and time will be given for taking up transports for succeeding services at a moderate expense, and a stroke may probably be struck on the trade and foreign settlements of the enemy when they are least prepared for it. Impressions of this kind made in the first year of the war are not to be recovered, and if delayed to a later period are seldom or [n]ever made successfully.

If you wish to extend your views in building more ships for a future war, and which I think highly politic, contracts may be made with three builders in the river Thames and round Portsmouth, who have slips capable of containing ships of 74 guns, on the express condition of keeping them in frame and covered on their slips till it may be thought necessary to finish them. By this means you will be able to add twelve or fourteen sail of the line to the fleet in an early period of the war ; time will be given for those to be built in the king's yards to follow them ; and the slips that will otherways be suffered to go into decay, because not occupied during peace, will be kept in order for further building. Provident, however, as this measure is, I should not advise carrying it into execution till we

have suspended our own building in the king's yards, and fully replenished our stock of timber, as the extraordinary demand which this measure will occasion will immediately enhance the price of timber. When this object is secured, I should propose taking the first opportunity of an alarm to put it [in] execution. In the lesser yards, frigates may be built on a short notice, and must be contracted for in the commencement of any war that is like to be extensive in its operations.

Victualling Office

The first commissioner of this board should be placed in the same degree of authority as the comptroller of the navy, for conducting the business of that department. The trust is of considerable consequence, and though more simple in its line of operation, must have a considerable share in the secret preparations for the fleet in time of war. The arrangement of that board will require some alteration; and if the first commissioner was a nominal member of the navy board, as the comptroller of the navy ought to be of the admiralty, it would add very much to the facility and despatch of all secret preparations in time of war, and become an effectual means of concealing them from the public and the enemy. The utility of the line of communication that would be kept up by this means between the admiralty, navy and victualling boards, is inconceivable to those who have not experienced the delays of office in services of despatch. In short, if I was first lord of the admiralty, I should, for my own credit and the facility of doing my business, most earnestly recommend it to the king in council.

Ordnance

As this office is under the direction of so able a master-general, I shall only say that in order to secure secrecy in every future war, it will be necessary to lodge proper trains of artillery for one or more expeditions at Portsmouth and Plymouth, so that no dependence whatever may be placed on Woolwich when the time comes, but to replace them when they are issued. I had much conversation with Lord G. Germain in the last war, and he saw the propriety of it; but the want of a minister to connect and control the several departments prevented that and every useful measure from being carried into execution.

Army Victualling

The direction of the transports employed in this service, as well as conducting the troops, ought, on account of despatch and secrecy, to be wholly vested in the comptroller of the navy, acting under the heads of the manning and admiralty boards; as ought those of the victualling, for the same reason, to be under the first commissioner of that board. The whole, however, as well as the ordnance, should be contracted for by one board, to prevent a competition in the market, and which cost the public many thousands in the late war. Cork being the only convenient port for providing and shipping the salt provisions for the army, and where transports can be refitted, it will be necessary to make some preparation for that service during the peace, and which may be managed with very little expense. I have already taken some steps towards it by getting the survey made of an island at the mouth of the harbour,¹ which may be rented for £20 *per annum*.

¹ Cf. *ante*, pp. 276-7.

It is well situated for shipping the provisions, and storehouses may be erected on it at a moderate expense:—I may venture to say, for one year's rent of what was paid for those occupied at Cork. The advantages of this place, in point of expense and despatch, are very great. If adopted, the naval establishment at Kinsale, which is very inconveniently situated, and on sufferance, may be moved to the same island.

I have now sketched out everything that has occurred to me as necessary for preparation in the branch in which I was more immediately concerned in the last war. The branches are numerous and the object important towards the success of a future war. Extensive, however, as they are, and difficult of execution, I will undertake to bring the whole of them to an issue if the navy board is arranged upon some such plan as I have pointed out, and I am supported by the countenance of the king, the minister and the first lord of the admiralty. With these helps, application and diligence will accomplish it; but if the office continue as it is, without energy or the means of checking abuses or expense; if everything I do is examined with a jealous and suspicious eye, it cannot be expected that I am to sacrifice my own comfort on account of the public [or contend with a nest of hornets, that will be very peaceable as long as they are suffered to rest, but will not want for support if I ventured to disturb them,]¹ without even the chance of being of service to it, or contend with a set of selfish, designing men who will not want for support if I venture to push forward public measures that must intrench equally on their vanity and their [corrupt]² partial practices.

¹ Deleted : the revised version is in Ramsay's hand.

² Deleted : correction written in by Middleton.

Admiralty

I look upon the whole success of the navy in time of war to depend upon the good or bad management of this board. If the first lord is a man of business, clear in his professional knowledge, ready at resources, is open to information and searches for merit, everything may be expected from the proper direction of such a fleet as I have described, and which a short time may put in our hands. But if he be wanting, be misled by prejudices or be shut against information, it is of little consequence to the public who is at the head of the administration.

Every kind of improvement and preparation in the civil as well as the military branches ought to originate here. If brought about by any other means, it must be subject to jealousy, opposition, tedious discussion and dilatory management. There is, however, a necessity for laying a foundation for future success while the peace lasts, and which must supersede every other consideration; nor can any subject of greater importance employ the attention of administration than how to draw the proper advantage from the co-operation of the several naval boards when occasion calls for it.

The discipline of the navy was never at a lower ebb than at the present moment. The captains at Portsmouth have, within these few days, declined an enquiry into the loss of a transport, though it has been the invariable practice of service to do so when any doubt has arisen on the propriety of the claim. Something must be done to restore it, while it is still peace and while government have the staff in their own hands.

The Instructions for the government of the navy, from length of time and alteration of circumstances,

have become, in many articles, obsolete ; in others, contradictory ; and few or none of them apply to the present custom of the service. The Act of Parliament commonly called the Articles of War is in want of amendment to fit it for present circumstances¹ ; and that for the payment of seamen's wages is, from a want of knowledge in the framer, subject to cavil and dispute. These defects occasioned several mutinies in the last war, and the mutineers escaped punishment from scruples and distinctions which appeared to me more worthy of attornies than military officers. The same disposition will appear again if no means are taken to prevent it.

The navy board part of those instructions has been revised and sent to the admiralty upwards of two years, but I have heard no more of them. No time ought to be lost in regulating the whole for the approval of the king in council. Till this is completed, there cannot possibly be any fixed government in the naval department. The French have already formed a new ordinance for the marine, and seem much more advanced than we are in this branch of the service.

The naval signals are under the same circumstances as the instructions, and require a revisal. An ignorance in this branch has often been, and always will be, fatal to naval operations.

These are necessary preparations for acting vigorously in a future war, and as such I have marked them.

¹ It held good, however, for another 70 years, till 1861.

*Navy Office*¹

The duty of the different commissioners may be collected from the Duke of York's Instructions, which are still in force, and though admirably calculated for carrying on the business as it then stood, they require some alteration to make them applicable to the present day. The navy at that time was comparatively small, its establishment low, and the business easily conducted; it is now swelled to a magnitude scarcely credible, many other branches of the public accounts have been added to the office, and the whole become so numerous as to have got beyond the management of it. The comptroller's duty in particular is beyond the power of any individual, however able or willing to undertake it. It requires so unremitting an attendance, so much labour of mind and body, that his head and hands are unequal to the management of it. His duty as comptroller includes not only the conducting all the public correspondence and business of the board, but the charge of three great offices within the navy office. He visits the yards of Deptford and Woolwich weekly, controls the payment of them, and of all ships paid off at them. The correspondence is so much increased as to have required, during the whole of the late war, his attendance from 10 in the morning till 4 or 6 in the evening, for every day in the week, and to employ the greatest part of his time otherways. His attendance on the first lord of the admiralty and other members was seldom less than three or four times in the week. From them he received such information and orders as were necessary for

¹ There are two drafts of this paragraph, both very foul. The one here printed seems the second edition; but they are essentially the same.

providing, without discovery, the various preparations for expeditions of a secret nature. Transports and victuallers were taken up without official authority ; provisions were loaded and despatched, contracts were entered on, and bargains of great value concluded without any participation with the navy board. The navy board, indeed, relying on my management and fidelity, never scrupled taking upon trust what I chose to order, nor to confirm the bargains when the official authority was received. It is necessary to mention these circumstances, that measures may be contrived, against any future war, to provide for services of this kind in a more regular way, and care may be taken to bring them vouchers properly into the office. In the late instance, it was impossible, as I had no assistance whatever, but my own hands, to carry on a correspondence which had very nearly turned my brain. If it is to be conducted by the comptroller of the navy in future, he must be armed with authority for carrying such services into execution ; he must have proper assistance allowed for keeping everything in proper form ; he must be made responsible for his conduct under such circumstances and be obliged to deliver into office, at the end of the services, the authority under which he acted and the vouchers and other papers relative to the business.¹

The comptroller is, at this time, possessed of much correspondence of this kind which ought to be in the office for the information of future boards ; but for want of the assistance above mentioned, and his time being otherways so much taken up, it consists of such scraps and memoranda as are scarcely legible² to any other person than himself.

¹ The second draft stops here.

² Some of these we still have : the description is fairly accurate.

Another very great defect appears in the general constitution of the board, which requires much consideration and amendment. The important business of the different offices with the navy office has fallen, in a manner, entirely into the hands of the head clerks. This is owing in some measure, and particularly in the comptroller and surveyor and clerk of the acts, to the load of current business that requires their constant attendance at the board; but there is no reason why this should be the case in the other offices, as the commissioners who have the care of them, not being professional men, are seldom required to be at the board, and may pass almost the whole of their time, if necessary, in superintending the business of their office, which, if properly attended to, with the occupation of comptrolling payments, would employ their whole time. In the comptroller's office, where accounts of the utmost consequence are examined, it is essentially necessary that a head should be put over them, who can give his whole time to the superintendence of them, and which is in no degree possible while the business of the board requires so constant an attendance. In the most important one of bills and accounts, it is, fortunately for the public, supplied with a head clerk of the first abilities in his profession, of the most unremitting application and inflexible integrity. While he remains, it is of little consequence in that line who is comptroller; but whenever he leaves the office, I dread the consequences to the public unless some essential alteration takes place in it. In the comptroller's office for foreign accounts, it will appear that many accounts of great value are examined, which require knowledge and attention. These, too, require more time than the comptroller can possibly be supposed to give them under the

present increased state of the fleet and office. In his office of ships' books, a knowledge of the office and application is sufficient, and requires no other attention than to see the business is kept up.

In this short sketch of the office, it will naturally occur that in order to have the business properly attended to and examined, the offices should be separated from the current business, and heads placed over them who shall not be required to attend the correspondence and current service of the board, but made responsible for the due execution of the office duty, and examination of accounts &c. thereunto belonging, the correspondence being in a great degree part of it. The comptroller, surveyors, clerk of the acts and one extra commissioner are sufficient for the current service of the board, and will find sufficient employment in executing the different lines that fall to their share while there. More members are unnecessary and indeed inconvenient; because, having little to do, they naturally fall into familiar conversation and interrupt those who are employed in business. Their attendance at the pay office, and, above all, the general business of the office will find them sufficient and important employment if properly attended to, and which can never be the case while they think their attendance necessary at the board. How this separation is to be made must be left to the discretion of the commissioners. My own idea is that one of the civil commissioners should have the superintendence of the comptroller's office for bills and accounts, as immediately connected with each other; one commissioner, the treasurer's accounts; one, the ticket office; one, storekeeper's accounts; and one, the victualling accounts and slop office. The commissioners who superintend them to have no business at the board, but

when their assistance is called for at contracts or otherways.

But in order to keep up the controlling power of the comptroller, the offices in general to be subject to his inspection separately and to the direction of the board consecutively, and as the appointment of clerks hitherto has been not only a considerable patronage, but an emolument of great value, care must be taken not to lessen the comptroller's consequence in these ways, nor of any other member who has hitherto had the appointment of them. The premium may be retained for the public use, and satisfaction made to the parties. Fees may be collected in the same way and applied to the increase of salaries in the different offices.

Clerks in offices must be prohibited from being agents. They are too generally so at present, and the public service much injured by it.

The yard departments require much attention; and when under consideration, Sir C. M. will give every information in his power, as well as on every other subject of reform, when applied to for that purpose.

Impressing of Seamen and raising them by Bounty

This is a most material subject, and requires the utmost attention and deliberation during the peace. In the usual way of conducting it, it is subject to the greatest possible abuses, and very far from producing the end expected from it. A plan, therefore, ought to be formed at the admiralty, ready for execution on the first appearance of war, but carefully concealed from the clerks in office. The impress warrants should be ready signed and nothing wanting but filling up the dates when a press was necessary. It has been owing to a want

of secrecy that general presses have never been productive ; and I hardly remember an instance when the discovery has not been made before the warrants were issued. This is a subject of great importance, as the first blow is always the most effectual one ; and one ship, in the first year of a war, is worth two at any other period of it. If the business of the impress service is properly managed on shore, and the small craft well disposed for acting afloat, I am confident that 60,000 men, including the peace establishment, may be easily raised within the first year, and if the powers of the legislation are added to it, 20,000 landmen yearly may by a parish vote be added to it. With such a force well directed, we can have nothing to fear, but everything to hope. I beg pardon for detaining you so long upon this subject, and shall be very happy if anything I have said can contribute to your —¹ ² The fisheries offer a nursery for seamen superior to everything our rivals can propose, and they are a branch of trade that can, without much loss, be suspended for a given time. If that suspension supposed even a maintenance of the fishermen's families while they were in service, it would be much cheaper than the ordinary way of manning the navy by impress. But government must interfere actively in the establishment of them.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

18th August, 1788.

Sir,—There appeared to me something so striking in Mr. Bowen's³ success against the

¹ Stops abruptly.² Added, in Ramsay's writing.³ James Bowen, master of the *Queen Charlotte* on the 1st June, 1794 : died, a retired rear-admiral, in 1835.

smugglers, and the advantages that might be derived from having some revenue vessels of the *Wasp's* construction commanded by active masters, and cruising under the protection of the king's frigates, that I encouraged him to send me his papers with a view to lay them before you.

If to activity afloat there was added a committee of smuggling, formed out of the most proper members of the boards of customs and excise, who should have no other object to attend to, I should have no doubt of seeing this shameful practice annihilated.

In mentioning a committee for the management of everything relative to smuggling, I am warranted from long experience in office to say that numbers without arrangement are incapable of executing a business which consists of extent and variety; and where the responsibility is so divided there can be no exertion; whereas men of very moderate abilities, having but one object to engage their attention, will make great strides in knowledge, and produce effects that are not to be expected from a board at large.

It was on this principle and feeling the sad effects of numbers without arrangement, that I ventured to suggest the necessity of enquiring into the manner of carrying on business in the navy office; and it was owing to my having the whole labour of attendance, though without effect, on my shoulders, that I recommended the assistance of committees instead of individuals, for the great branches of stores and accounts. As far as my experience reaches, it is the most perfect system that can be adopted for carrying on a great complicated business; and I will venture to say that it is not in the power of government to form any plan of economy that will reduce the naval expenses or bring them under

any regular system till this measure is carried into execution.

My reason for mentioning masters in the navy in preference to lieutenants for these revenue vessels, and to be employed for a limited time only, is: That they are fewer in number, more roughly educated, and their characters better known. They are the standing pilots, too, of the king's ships, and would be increasing their knowledge in that useful and necessary branch, while they are serving the public in another.

Mr. Bowen is, at this time, master of the Cumberland, and a very intelligent active officer.

I have the honour. . . .

Enclosure 1

Mr. James Bowen to Middleton

Plymouth. 17th July, 1788.

Sir Charles,—A few days before I left town you had the goodness to say if I stated my services when in the revenue, and the fitness of the Wasp lugger to be employed on that service, you would take an opportunity of communicating it to the treasury.

I trust, Sir, I shall not be thought too troublesome in taking the liberty of enclosing an abstract of my proceedings during the time I commanded the above-mentioned vessel, together with a copy of a letter from the commissioner of the customs approving my conduct, and a list of seizures, a copy of which was sent to the board of customs, with a letter of recommendation by the collector of this port.

The great success I met with in the Wasp was chiefly owing to her sailing fast, my thorough knowledge of this coast, the practice of the smugglers, and obtaining from time to time good information. Captain Byron, who is now in town, can inform you

the active part I took in capturing four large luggers and a sloop belonging to Cawsand, during the time I was master of the *Druid* on the Plymouth station.

I thought it would have been trespassing too much on Mr. Pitt's valuable time when I had the honour of a conference with him on the slave business, or I would have taken that opportunity of mentioning my experience of this coast, the illicit practice of the smugglers now carrying on at this time, and might have pointed out to him the best mode to distress the smugglers and to prevent smuggling.

I must beg leave to observe the Cawsand smugglers and the smugglers on this coast are all very expert lugger sailors, and will have as many luggers employed in the smuggling trade next winter as ever they had, knowing very well a cutter can never catch a lugger where there is room to work their vessels; and I venture to assert they will each of them make a voyage in a week, which won't be less than 6,000 ankers or 60,000 gallons of spirits; this may appear a large quantity, but is nothing in comparison to what will be landed in this neighbourhood, taking in Mevagissey Bay, St. Austell, Fowey, Looe, Bigbury Bay, &c. &c. All these places employ luggers to land cargoes, if the *Wasp*, or some other lugger, is not employed to counteract them. I do assure you, Sir, she has not her equal for sailing and fitness for the revenue service; and should I be so fortunate to be employed in her again, I dare say Mr. Pitt and the treasury would soon be convinced of the utility of employing so valuable a lugger.

I wi[ll menti]on¹ a proof of the increase of smuggling since the W[asp has]¹ been put out of the service. Spirit, at that time, sold for £2 12s. 6d.

¹ Conjecture: writing effaced by the seal.

per anker ; it now sells for £1 6s. 0d. per anker, which is less than 3s. per gallon. I could give you a number of other proofs of the propriety of employing this vessel, but it would be dwelling too long on your patience, which I am afraid I have done already ; but I could not well make it shorter and convince you, Sir, of the necessity there is for a good look out on this coast, and the construction of a vessel appointed for that service. I have informed Captain Macbride of this transaction, who says he will write.

I am, . . . J. BOWEN.

Enclosure 2

*Commissioners of Customs to the Collector and
Comptroller of Customs, Plymouth*

[Copy.] Custom House, London. 7th April, 1787.

Gentlemen,—Having read your letter of the 7th ultimo, transmitting a particular account of the proceedings of Captain James Bowen, commander of the Wasp revenue cutter at your port since December last, in endeavouring to capture the Hawk and other smuggling cutters belonging to Cawsand, and representing that part of his crew, who had been ordered to that place to endeavour to prevent a cargo from being landed from the Hawk cutter before mentioned, were assaulted by a large gang of smugglers and several of them wounded, particularly Jacob George, who has been ever since confined on shore under the care of a surgeon :—

We direct you to acquaint Captain Bowen that we very much approve of his conduct ; and in order that the persons concerned in assaulting his crew may be brought to justice, he is to use his best endeavours to discover the names of the offenders, and to report them to the board.

And you are at liberty, when Jacob George shall be recovered and returned to his duty, to transmit the surgeon's bill, certified for our consideration.

THOS. BOONE,	H. PELHAM,
J. POWNALL,	W. E. AGAR.

The Collector and Comptroller of Plymouth have great pleasure in imparting to Captain Bowen the foregoing letter from the commissioners of the customs fully approving his conduct.

HENRY FOLCHER,
J. NEWTON.

Enclosure 3

Mr. Folcher to the Commissioners of Customs

Custom House, Plymouth. 24th September, 1787.

Honourable Sirs,—Your honours having been pleased by your letter of the 14th instant, to signify that you had resolved to discontinue the contract for the Wasp lugger at this port, on the 5th of January next: the said lugger having been built solely for the purpose of looking after the smugglers on this coast, in which she has been very successful, and is so much better suited in all respects for that business than any other, I am therefore induced to make a tender of her for the sum of one thousand pounds, should your honours think fit to continue her in the service on the establishment; but should you not think proper to purchase her, in that case I have to request permission to avail myself of any offer that may be made for the purchase of the said vessel, or otherways, between this and the 5th January next; and I trust that from your honours' liberality and the particular circumstances of the

case, no objection will be made to my disposing of my property as desired.

Should the vessel be purchased for your service, it would be doing great injustice to the present commander, Mr. Bowen, was I not to add that he has approved himself a most able and faithful officer; as a mark of his diligence, I submit the enclosed sketch of the seizures made by him in the course of ten months, being the time he has had the command, amounting to little less than £5,000; and I am convinced from his merit and integrity with his abilities as an officer, your honours cannot have a more suitable or proper person for the command, and as such, with submission, pray to recommend him to your honours' notice and protection.

I am, . . .

H. FOLCHER.

[The amount given—with all the details—in the 'sketch' referred to, is £6,261 17s. 8d.]

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Teston. 22nd August, 1788.

Dear Sir,—Lord Chatham mentioned to me your plan for an India squadron the first visit I made him after he came into office. I told his lordship at that time, that I saw no difficulty in the naval part, when the navy board was ripe for it; but if such a proposition was sent there under present circumstances, a cloud of objections would be made to the trouble that must necessarily fall on them in the execution, and a downright negative put upon it; whereas, if left till the reports of the commissioners of enquiry passed the council, I should find no

difficulty in procuring a favourable report, and as little in carrying it into execution.

Under the present arrangement of the navy board we are incapable of undertaking such a plan, and the share of business that falls to my lot is so much beyond my strength, and the unremitting attendance it requires so injurious to my health, that, but for the prospect of assistance held out by the commissioners of enquiry, I should have withdrawn myself from office at the late armament.

I would submit to you whether, under a certainty of assistance of the navy board when made capable of giving it, you would not save time by drawing up your plan for the approbation of the cabinet; and if the rough copy is sent to me, I shall be very willing to give my opinion on any naval matter that may be contained in it. When approved in council, it will be to go through the secretary of state and admiralty before it is referred to the navy board; and when the naval part reaches Lord Chatham officially, it may be detained there till we are ripe for reporting on it.

If this is not done before the parliament meets, you are well aware that little will be done afterwards, and as to myself I have really not a moment that I can call my own during the time of its sitting.

In the meantime, believe me,

MEMORANDUM

Impress Service

[*Rough draft.*]

27th August, 1788.

As this gentleman's¹ application has brought the impress service before Lord Chatham, Sir Charles Middleton will lay before his lordship a

¹ There is no key to this reference.

short view of the state it is now in and the alterations that will be necessary in order to make it effectual on any future armament.

The impress service in its best state has never furnished more than 22 or 23,000 men, including every other means, in the first year of a war, and which, circumstanced as we are at present, will not man one half of the line-of-battle ships that are fit for service ; whereas, if the whole, or even a third more, could be procured in that time, an enemy would be crushed and his seamen captured in the first setting [out] of a war. If any argument is necessary to prove the inefficiency of the present mode of raising men for the fleet, this view of the subject must have its weight ; but as it is not Sir C. M.'s intention to enter further into the argument at present, he will only point out what appears to him to be necessary for making the present system effectual as long as it [is] allowed to subsist, and to point out the defects that have always impeded its success on the first setting out.

As the impress service is now managed, the preparations always defeat the purpose. The making out of press warrants at the admiralty never fails getting wind, and which cannot be wondered at, when the advantages to be gained, by such information, in the funds is considered. The next step is sending press warrants to the commanding officers at the ports by admiralty messengers, which, together with the consultations in town, must effectually publish the intention before it can be carried into execution ; the purpose is thereby defeated and all the seamen that are at home drove into holes and corners.

What I would therefore propose is—to have a sufficient number of press warrants signed as will serve every ship and vessel in commission, and all

the officers intended to be employed in this service. To select a number of the most active officers to be employed on shore for the first six months, but who should be at liberty at the end of that time, and have a preference in commanding cruising ships; and then to be relieved by those of good character, who may require indulgence from infirmities or other complaints. These officers to be immediately informed of the places they are to act in on the first breaking out of a press, and furnished with instructions and a warrant which they are to put into execution at a moment's notice. Their address to be lodged with the secretary of the admiralty, who is to have printed forms always ready signed for their acting, and the date only wanting, and their scene of action as near as possible to their abode. Every commanding officer to be furnished with a sufficient number of warrants for the officers under him, and each ship or vessel in commission to have his warrant attached to his commission¹ and returned when out of commission.

By these preparations, the impress will begin in all places at the same time; the intention will be entirely secret, and the best seamen, and many of them, will be procured without difficulty. As soon as it takes place, the hospital ships, slop ships and receiving ships must be immediately commissioned, and the tenders in the river and at other places prepared without loss of time. If this plan is approved, Sir C. M. will give every assistance in his power towards filling it up. But he must observe, that he thinks it impossible to fit out a number of ships with any degree of despatch under the present system of conducting the impress service.

¹ So in MS. Presumably 'the captain of each ship' is meant.

MIDDLETON TO LORD SANDWICH

[Autograph draft.]

12th January, 1789.

My Lord,—It is generally said that your lordship may have the admiralty¹ if you choose it, and that you deliberate on the acceptance of it. If your lordship hesitates from a remembrance of former times, I have only to say that the military part of the service have since that time been brought to a proper sense of distinction between your lordship's conduct and those that followed you in office; and the civil branch is in that state as to secure your lordship the full credit of the navy you had so great a share in raising, and particularly of the copper branch, which is nearly in a state of perfection. There remains only the reports of the commissioners of enquiry concerning this office, the victualling, and the dockyards, to complete the system. I have attended Mr. Pitt and Lord Chatham within these two months, to revise them; and but for the king's illness they would have passed the council before this time.

The improvements in the dockyards are in a great state of forwardness, and the foreign yards so nearly completed that three years more will finish them. The line-of-battle ships in complete condition are numerous, and their stores complete and in the best order; the store-houses, too, are filled with every article for them. This is a true

¹ During the king's illness and the heated discussions as to the regency, it was confidently said that the Prince of Wales had the list of his ministry drawn up and the several members of it ready to enter on their office. The Duke of Portland was to be the head of it; Fox and Lord Stormont, secretaries of state; Lord Spencer, lord lieutenant of Ireland; and Sandwich, or Lord Fitzwilliam, first lord of the admiralty. See *Court and Cabinets*, ii. 102-04; *Cornwallis Correspondence*, i. 419.

representation of our present state, and whoever comes into the admiralty in the present junction will have the full credit of perfecting everything relative to this branch of the navy. In such parts therefore as belong to this civil department, I will, if possessed of your lordship's former confidence, save you every kind of perplexity and trouble; and excepting signals, naval instructions and a few lesser matters in the admiralty line, I do not know a single article that will not be completed in six months.

May I now ask, my lord, Who has so great a right to the credit of all this as your lordship? and, as the whole business is just winding up, who ought to reap the harvest of it but your lordship? I beg pardon, my lord, for the liberty I have taken; but as the public have declared the probability of your lordship coming to the head of the admiralty, I should have been wanting to my own feelings and that regard which I have for your lordship's credit if I did not add my mite to express my wishes that your lordship would accept the admiralty on the present occasion¹; being with much respect and esteem,

Your lordship's most faithful
and obedient servant,

CHARLES MIDDLETON.

[Feb. 1789.]

My Lord,—As my earnest wishes concerning the admiralty have not prevailed, I take the earliest opportunity of congratulating your lordship on the

¹ This is, indeed, an extraordinary letter, and especially so if we compare it with those written when the navy was rendered impotent by Sandwich's jobbery (*ante* pp. 2-30). But in their personal relations, Middleton preferred the King Log of Sandwich to the King Stork of Howe.

very honourable station you fill in the new administration, and to request your good offices in forwarding a public object which I have very much at heart. I am given to understand by those who are friends to the Duke of Portland that his grace is disposed to take an early opportunity of bringing forward the reports made on the naval department by the commissioners of enquiry, and having had occasion to write to him and Lord Fitzwilliam on the subject of them, I must request your lordship's patience, while I state the share I have had in bringing them to maturity.

I do not mean to trouble your lordship with a detail of all the naval reports, but of those only in which I feel myself particularly concerned. The fifth and sixth reports comprehend the navy office and dockyards. They have been founded on the information which my long experience has enabled me to give, and confirmed by a very long and close investigation of all the parties concerned. The result is—That they have chalked out (as far as my opinion goes) the best system that can be devised for the management of the business in future, and on principles that must produce economy and exertion in every branch of the department. When your lordship takes the trouble of reading the depositions and examining the report, I have little doubt but that you will concur in that opinion. These two reports, being thought the most important, were taken up, first by Lord Chatham and Mr. Pitt, and, after being some time in their possession, were sent to me for my observations; when I had their commands to attend them on the revisal of them. It was afterwards determined, with the concurrence of the lord president, and after going through the usual forms, to carry the navy office report with a very few exceptions into execution first, and, at my

desire, to leave the dockyard over for a few weeks, till I had time given me for arranging the business of the navy office on the new plan. Unfortunately for this report, the king was taken ill just at this time and a stop of course put to the progress of this business.

It would be a false delicacy in me, my lord, not to say that I am highly interested in having these reports brought speedily forward. My health has suffered considerably from the pressure that has lain on my shoulders for upwards of ten years past; and these regulations holding out the assistance of a deputy comptroller must naturally afford a satisfaction very agreeable to my situation. I should however be very little pleased with myself if I sought my own comfort by this arrangement; but the truth is, that no one advantage can arise to me, that will not produce twenty fold to the public, and which I flatter [myself] I could easily convince your lordship of, by a perusal and explanation of the report; and I have no scruple in saying to your lordship what I did to Mr. Pitt—that being the instrument of carrying these regulations into execution, was the greatest inducement I had to continue in office after I was made a flag; not from the advantages they held out in salary, which are but nominal, but from the great labour I had had in collecting the materials from my first coming into office, and knowing the difficulty any other person less acquainted with the business would have to contend with in carrying them into effect.

For these reasons I shall esteem it a particular favour, added to the many great ones I have already received, if your lordship will, with your usual despatch in office, forward the 5th and 6th reports on the navy office and dockyards. The alterations which were approved by Mr. Pitt and

Lord Chatham, are in my possession, and shall be communicated to Lord Fitzwilliam and your lordship when I return to town; the rough sheets went through my hands before they were engrossed, and which is the reason why my remarks were so few.

I am, with much respect and esteem,

Your lordship's

most faithful and obedient servant,

CHARLES MIDDLETON.

LORD CHATHAM TO MIDDLETON

[*Holograph.*]

Berkeley Square. 7th March, 1789.

Sir,—I am much obliged to you for your letter of 2nd inst., together with the observations enclosed on the subject of the reports. No steps, however, are likely to be very soon taken concerning them, as, though I am happy to be able to tell you that his Majesty's recovery is every day more and more confirmed, and that he is so well that business will begin in Parliament as usual on Tuesday, and all things resume their former course, yet it will be desirable to trouble the king for some time with no more business than is absolutely necessary; and before the reports could take place, his Majesty would probably wish to be fully apprised of their contents. Add to that, that in the unsettled state of things, none of the lords of the council, not even lord president, have looked into them, and during the sitting of parliament there will not be much leisure; and I should think besides, that a recess is the most favourable time for considering them; but upon this subject we may converse further when I have the pleasure of seeing you, which I suppose will be before very long.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

[*Rough copy. Endorsed: Not yet sent.*]

[May, 1789.]

I have delayed troubling you on the subject of the navy office till the parliament was prorogued, because I was aware of the business that must have necessarily occupied your time at that season, but I flatter myself from the interest you must have, as a minister, in seeing this department made equal to the duties and exertions expected from it, and from the obliging attention always paid to my situation, that you will have the goodness to extricate me from the state of uncertainty I have been under for some months past, and which has occasioned me much uneasiness.

I will not trespass on your time with a history of the state in which I found this office on my first coming to it in 1778, nor the pains and application which it has cost me to carry on the business with any degree of accuracy to the present time; neither will I dwell upon the labour I had in collecting and arranging materials of information from those gentlemen who were appointed by parliament to enquire into the state of it. This information, added to what the commissioners procured for themselves by a minute and tedious investigation, has been digested into a report and delivered into the privy council upwards of twelve months. Conscious as I am of the importance of this report and the principle of economy and exertion to which it leads, it would have been my pride to have carried it into execution, and being convinced of the impossibility of any successor of mine having the same interest to follow up the regulations proposed, I was anxious to continue where I am till the object of my labour was attained and the

public in full possession of the advantages arising from it. This object appeared at no great distance, when I had the honour of attending you and Lord Chatham¹ in Berkeley Square; and but for the public misfortune² that followed, I conclude the order in council would have passed.

It is now upwards of eight months since that event took place, and I declare to you, Sir, that nothing but the share I have had in this enquiry, the unwillingness I felt in giving up the labour of many years and the daily expectation of having the business arranged and assistance given, could have induced me to continue the same application and attendance which I am daily obliged to go through at this office in order to keep things from growing worse. No one but myself and the secretary can conceive the attendance that is necessary on my part at this office, to keep the business from stagnating and the clerks to their duty; but I am truly worn out, and the application which is necessary for the office in its present state is beyond my strength. I must therefore entreat the favour of you, Sir, either to bring these reports under the immediate consideration of the privy council, attended by the commissioners of enquiry and myself if necessary for information, or dismiss me from the business which it would have been my greatest pleasure to have continued to conduct under better regulations, but absolutely out of my power in the disordered state the department is now in.

I flatter myself, that you will not believe my resignation to be owing to discontent or party motives. I heartily disavow both. I believe you, Sir, to be the best minister this country has ever

¹ First lord of the admiralty, 16th July, 1788.

² The king's illness, declared 5th November, 1788.

had; but you are ill supported in the executive branches. I have continued acting as long I could see any chance of my being useful; but seeing credit and character is now concerned, and feeling my health decline under the burden imposed upon me here, I must either throw it down or sink under it.

Since writing this copy, Secretary taken ill and dying.¹ He was the only assistant I had, and therefore what was barely practicable before, with unremitting attendance, is now beyond my state of health and strength of constitution, and as others will not determine, I must do so for myself.

TO A FRIEND²

[*Rough draft.*]

[? May, 1789.]

My dear Friend,—As you may probably hear through the channel of your friends that I have expressed a wish of being removed from the navy office, it may appear remiss if I do not inform you of my reasons for so doing. You are no stranger to the importance of that office and the fatigues I have gone through since I have been in it. You are also acquainted with the enquiry that has been made into the state of the business, and that a report has been made to the king in council in consequence of it. That report was framed after a very strict investigation of the duties of each individual and confirmed by every kind of information which eleven years' experience could suggest. It contains

¹ Joshua Thomas, died 30th May, 1789.

² There is no indication of the person to whom this was to be written. Laforey would be a possible guess; but there must have been many others equally possible.

in my opinion the very best system that can be formulated for introducing economy in all the naval branches; and notwithstanding every effort in my power to get it brought forward, it has lain asleep near two years in the council. I do acknowledge to you as a friend that such inattention to public business, and to everything else that is not connected with politics, has very much lessened my expectation of any administration that can be formed in this country; and finding that I can be no longer useful in the station I am in, I have desired a removal to the admiralty¹ when opportunity offers, as has been customary with every predecessor I ever had in office.² Had the principles of these reports been carried into execution, as I expected, and that assistance given to me which the office requires I should have cheerfully continued my own exertions. I should not only have felt a satisfaction in the issues of my endeavours, but have had it in my power to have established rules that would have ensured economy in future, not to the number of thousands only in time of peace, but of hundreds of thousands in time of war.

¹ In these papers there is no other reference to this. Pitt seems to have pressed Middleton to go to the admiralty with Lord Chatham, in May 1788 (*cf.* the preceding letter, p. 321, and *Court and Cabinets of George III.* i. 385-86). He must have then refused; but in May 1789 was perhaps thinking more favourably of the proposal. This letter is probably about that date, or later.

² The only comptrollers who went direct from the navy office to the admiralty were Sir Charles Wager in 1718, and Sir Hugh Palliser in 1775.

TO THE KING

[*Endorsed in Middleton's hand: Proposed Memorial.*]

[*Rough draft.*]

[June, 1789.]

The humble memorial of Sir Charles Middleton, bart., rear admiral of the white squadron and comptroller of your Majesty's navy, humbly sheweth:—

That your Majesty's petitioner has been comptroller of the navy from the beginning of July 1778 to the present time.

That your petitioner during that time has conducted the business with unwearied diligence and unremitted attention.

That, but for the assistance and indefatigable labours of a most able secretary, it would have been impossible for your petitioner to have kept pace with the business.

That the comptroller of the navy, in King William's time, was allowed an instrument to act under him in lesser matters, as an assistant, when the duties of his office was not the shadow of what they are at present.

That no assistant was allowed, at that time, to the surveyor and clerk of the acts, but that two are now allowed to the surveyor.

That such assistant is more than ever necessary at this time, and also a deputy comptroller, to take the lead in business when the comptroller is absent through sickness or other necessary calls.

That the experience which your petitioner had acquired by conducting the business of this department for so many years, and the greatest part of that time in war, had enabled him to make many useful observations on the defects and obstacles to

carry on business and the means of remedying them.

That such information was communicated by your petitioner to the commissioners appointed by act of parliament to enquire into the state of the public offices.

That many of these defects are owing to want of arrangement, to the great increase of the fleet, to the multiplicity of business that has accompanied it, and to many other branches of duty being added to the department.

That the bringing of so much business before one board composed of nine, ten, and sometimes eleven commissioners, adds very considerably to the perplexity of carrying on the duty and tends very much to retard it.

That separating it occasionally into committees would be the means of having the business much better considered than it can be at present, and remove the evil complained of.

That the business consisting of correspondence, accounts and stores, naturally points out the duty of such committees.

That for want of such committees, the greatest trust in executing the business must necessarily be lodged in the head clerks.

That your petitioner more fully explained these subjects to the commissioners of enquiry; and being informed of their reports being laid before your Majesty, thought it his duty to wait the issue and not to interrupt the course of them by any petition that related to himself.

That your petitioner, very unfortunately, is obliged to depart from this resolution, by the unexpected death of Mr. Joshua Thomas, the secretary; and finding himself by that means deprived of his usual assistance, it is totally out of

his power to conduct the multiplied duties of so extensive a department without further assistance and a new arrangement of the business.

Your petitioner further states, that the allowances and emoluments annexed to his office, though established by long precedent, and necessary for the expenses attending it, have always been felt humiliating to your petitioner, derogatory to the office, and in many instances capable of being made very prejudicial to the public interest.

For all these reasons, your petitioner most humbly entreats your Majesty to take the prayer of his petition into your royal consideration, and order such arrangements and assistance as will apply to the great increase of business, and enable him to carry on the complicated duties of his office; and that he may also have the allowances and emoluments of his place resolved into salary, and paid to him accordingly. For all which your Majesty's most humble petitioner shall ever pray.

CAPTAIN CALDWELL¹ TO
MIDDLETON

Hertford Street. Wednesday, 2nd September, 1789.

My dear Sir,—I leave for you three French books relating to the French navy,² which may be

¹ Died, admiral and G.C.B., in 1820.—See *D.N.B.*

² It seems not improbable that two of these books may have been :—*L'art de la guerre sur mer, ou Tactique navale assujettie à de nouveaux principes et à un nouvel ordre de bataille*, par M. le Vicomte de Grenier, chef de division des armées navales. Paris, 1787 (4to. 54 pp., plates); and *Tactique navale, ou Traité sur les évolutions, sur les signaux et sur les mouvements de guerre*, par M. le Comte d'Amblimont, chef d'escadre des armées navales. Imprimée par ordre du roi. Paris, 1788 (4to. plates). The third may have been the official *Cours de Tactique, à l'usage des armées navales*, edited by Buor de la Charoulière, capitaine de vaisseau.

worth your looking into, just brought me by a nephew returned from his (second) travels. He has uncommon good sense, highly educated, with a strong desire for information, and capable of making good observations. He gives a very extraordinary account of the pains and expense the French are taking with the youth of their fleet, which he saw both at Rochefort and Toulon. The masters of the Academy are the first people for learning and abilities; that the whole is under excellent government; which I mention because he is a judge, having seen most of the academies on the continent, being taught at some; and amongst other searches for knowledge, been to sea in our fleet last war. He is well acquainted with Woolwich Academy, having studied there, and says the sea academies in France are far preferable, notwithstanding all the Duke of Richmond has done for that school; that it is wonderful what a progress they have made since the peace.

What a pity our Academy at Portsmouth is so neglected! I was bred there, and saw it with concern last April down to nothing. Much better, in my idea, have none, than continued on the present footing; and without any additional expense it might be made, if not so good as the French schools, at least equal to Woolwich, which I conceive I could point out with no difficulty. He, with much trouble, by means of a bribe, got on board the Commerce of Marseilles, a new ship of 120 guns, and thinks her as much larger than the Victory as the Victory is larger than the Alexander¹ (the ship he was at sea in). He took

Cf. Lacour Gayet, ii. 591. Of these, only the first (Grenier) is in the British Museum, and also in the library, R.U.S.I.

¹ *Cf. Journal of Rear-Admiral Bartholomew James (N.R.S., vol. vi.), p. 277.*

notice of ovens on board her to bake bread, and says they were not in the way; and the French observed they were surprised we had not adopted them. You know I think them a good thing, and was the only person of our fleet who tried it, when Doctor Blane's returns (second edition now published) proves the good effect of fresh bread—besides the saving to government; and if improvements are not made in peace, they won't in time of war.

Well knowing the pleasure you have in these subjects, and not finding you at home, I write this in your room. When at any time you have leisure, will wait upon you and tell you what more I heard and describe their new dock. Have marked in the book—academy and canonnières, which our marines might be improved to. We shall see these things when it is too late; I hear it is difficult to make alterations, but the old Duke of Bedford did not think so. Best compliments to Lady M——, and believe me,

Faithfully yours,
BEN. CALDWELL.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Woolwich. 24th September, 1789.

Dear Sir,—The very high respect I have for your abilities and rectitude of sentiment, has at all times inclined me to the support of your administration; and small as my influence is, I should be sorry to take any step that might in any degree injure its success without laying the circumstances before you.

The impropriety of my representing a borough so intimately connected with the civil department of the navy as Rochester has been long known to you

through Mr. Rose, and the impossibility of going through such a correspondence to the interruption of my public business constantly complained of. I took the earliest opportunity of acquainting Lord Chatham with these circumstances after he came into office, and have within this fortnight sent him a letter from Alderman Baker which shows the necessity of my successor's being immediately resolved on. The enclosed letter from my friend, Mr. Morton Pitt, brings the matter to a still more speedy issue, and though I strongly declined this proposal when made to me last winter, yet there are some circumstances in it that appear favourable; and one, not the least immaterial, is that of preventing a sea officer adverse to your interest from starting there.

In order, however, to comply with his request, and to behave handsomely to my own friends at Rochester, it will be necessary to advise them publicly of my intentions before Mr. M. Pitt nominates me at Poole, and which is the cause of my troubling you on the present occasion; and till you have determined on the person to succeed me, I shall beg of him to postpone, as long as he is able, any nomination on his own or my part—which I hope will prove agreeable to you.

I avoid troubling you with my feelings on the subject of the naval reports, and the very disagreeable situation I have been left in for some time past, because Lord Chatham had assured me before he left town that they would be taken into consideration the end of this month, and that he intended speaking to you to get them referred to a committee at the council to be then held.

Whether this measure was carried into execution, I have had no opportunity of knowing; but when I consider the public pledge that my name is to for

reducing the naval expenses, and the impossibility of taking one previous step towards it in the present state of the office ; when I reflect how near the period is approaching, and what time it will take to arrange the business in office before anything can be done towards reduction ; and above all the disagreeable part I shall have to act in it, even when fully supported, I must acknowledge my anxiety is more than I can express. I have therefore most earnestly to request, if any assistance is required of me in bringing forward this reduction, and establishing economy and good order in the department, that you will have the goodness to decide this business while there is leisure for it, and not suffer it to go beyond the time proposed.

I am with much respect, . . .

[*Rough draft.*]

[? Autumn, 1789.]

Dear Sir,—I acquainted Mr. Rose, upwards of two years since, with the disagreeable situation I found myself in by representing the city of Rochester, not only from its vicinity and the additional labour occasioned thereby, but from the great number of freemen and their connections belonging to the dockyards of Deptford, Woolwich, Chatham and Sheerness. It is difficult to say from which of these circumstances I have suffered most ; but in a public point of view, it must at all times be improper for a comptroller of the navy to represent so many dockyards, as he must either sacrifice the service to the will of his constituents, or be at constant war with them and his own feelings. In short the conflict has been so great for these four years past, that I am become wholly unequal to it ; and, that I might not put you to any inconvenience, when the dissolution of parliament took place, I

desired Mr. Rose to communicate my inability of undertaking any additional duty while those of the navy office hung so heavy on my shoulders.

Should the business here be thrown into committees and the necessary assistance allowed, I shall not object to any borough that does not bring along with it much correspondence and improper solicitation. If Captain Cornwallis is not returned again for Portsmouth, I do not foresee much plague from that borough, nor any mischief that can arise to the service from irregular applications; but as to Rochester or Plymouth, they are beyond my strength—as is, indeed, any attendance in parliament while so much is expected from me here. My health has suffered very much from confinement and attention to business, and it has been the wish of my friends for some time past that I should pass a few weeks at Bath or some other waters; but having no person to take up the business in my absence, it has not been in my power.

From these considerations and your usual kindness, I flatter myself you will have the goodness to find some means of making my situation more satisfactory than it is at present; and the more so, as no indulgence can be shown to me that will not, in its consequences, be advantageous to the public. It is ease and not emolument that I am soliciting; and when it is considered that I have never absented myself from the business of this office for these ten years past, nor shrunk from any extra duty that has been thrown upon it, I trust I shall not be thought impatient in wishing now for some relief.

PITT TO MIDDLETON

[Holograph.]

Hollwood. 3rd October, 1789.

My dear Sir,—From the enquiries which I have had an opportunity of making since I wrote to you, I have no doubt in assuring you that it will give me great pleasure to see you a candidate for Poole, in case Mr. M. Pitt should stand for the county as he now proposes, and I shall be extremely happy in your being chosen for a place which, I flatter myself, you will not find so troublesome as that with which you are at present connected.

I am with great regard, dear Sir,

Your obedient and faithful servant,

W. PITT.

MIDDLETON TO LORD CHATHAM

[Copy—Autograph.]

13th December, 1789.

My Lord,—I am very sorry to trouble you again on the subject of the reports, and though I shall have the honour of waiting on you next week, yet I think a day or two of such consequence as to obtain your excuse.

I do not know whether I have so far explained myself as to give your lordship to understand that the plan you mention, and which seems to me to be most agreeable—viz., a competent secretary and a sea officer next in the patent to the comptroller—is everything that I can personally wish for; and if I have urged anything further, it is supposing it to be on the public account. But of this your lordship and Mr. Pitt must be the best judges; and if so determined, I will endeavour to do as much as the powers granted will permit, though it will be far short of what the public have been given to hope in the way of reduction.

COMMISSIONER FANSHAWE TO
MIDDLETON[*Holograph.*]

Plymouth Yard. 30th January, 1790.

Sir,—By this post I send to your board the deposition taken and other progress of enquiry into the fraudulent practices represented in Mr. Batten's letter, and I take the liberty of then offering, for your more particular information, sentiments which the short time I have been in my present situation has afforded me ample opportunity to form. There seems to me to be and to have long existed a general relaxation (though less in some than in other departments) from the system of regulation which the navy board has wisely thought proper to establish; and such relaxation seems to have produced almost all the irregularities naturally to be expected from it, insomuch that the task of reform is become odious, difficult and almost impracticable without the confidence and support of the higher authorities.

At present I will confine myself to the subject of embezzlement, of which every day produces instances. Comparison of Batten's letter to the board with an anonymous letter sent to the builder respecting the malpractices of Haine the brazier (lately dismissed) demonstrates that each information came from the same hand. In my letter to the board I have briefly and moderately suggested the remissness of the porter, of which I have had constant reason to take notice, and I have repeatedly enjoined him to the strictest vigilance in his duty, and yesterday I issued the direction to him (a copy of which I herewith transmit to you), which produced his report to me this morning, of which

I also send you copies, which will demonstrate to you both the habit and disposition of the parties concerned. The storekeeper's infirmities disable him from such active and vigilant attention to the various objects of his trust as might be wished; but the same reason does not exist for the personal remissness of his clerks and indeed those in other departments.

In my letter to the board I have stated the assertion of a clerk of storekeeper, clerk of check and clerk of survey, of the personal attendance in cases relative to the glazier's shop; but circumstances arise to excite in my mind the unpleasant necessity of disbelieving them; and the reports to me of such repeated pilferings and embezzlements attracted my thoughts on the practicability, in some degree at least, of preventing them; and in order to inform myself with such view, I required, soon after I came hither, from the respective officers, the progress of every article of stores from the time of its being received into the yard, whether in manufactured or unmanufactured state, to the time of its ultimate expenditure. From the clerk of the rope yard I early received a satisfactory report, but have not yet from any other department. Knowing the progress of stores, it occurred to me that, in case of embezzlement, it would not be difficult to trace them through their various stages of responsibility by some person or other, and I still think that, by such means, embezzlement may, in some degree, be checked; and see, at present, no way so effectual to eradicate the ill-practices at the glazier's shop, as by putting an end to the existing contract—which may be done at six months' notice; and if another contract for the glazier's work be thought advisable, to insert in it such restrictions as may be judged most remedial against them in future.

Upon a bill being brought to me for my signature soon after my coming to this office, for oakum picked by the poor of Stoke, I observed no voucher of the quantity of junk issued, when or to whom, nor of the receipt of the oakum, or of its goodness; the storekeeper singly having signed to amount of the bill and its purpose. I endeavoured to remedy this seeming irregularity by directing that no bills, on any account whatever, should ever be presented for my signature without vouchers, from the proper officers, of the warrant, purpose, nature, quantity, quality, fitness and receipt of stores and performance of work done; but a check still was wanting on the issue of junk, which I endeavoured in some degree to provide by verbal direction to the master attendant. I beg leave to suggest to your consideration whether conversion of junk into oakum for the use of the yard might not be performed in the yard by those who are past other labour, and now take the wages on the funds of government without any concomitant employment.

In order to save this day's post, I must put a stop to further communication of my sentiments to you, at present. I beg that you will believe me to be

Your very respectful

and obedient, humble servant,

RO[BER]T FANSHAWE.

[Holograph.]

9th February, 1790.

I received in due time the favour of your letter [of] 1st inst., and have since received safely your rough abstract book. The more I look into it, the more I [am] persuaded of the utility of such digested system of instruction, suitable to all persons, on all occasions relative to the navy. Until I can get into my official residence, I shall be (as I have experienced)

liable to such interruptions in my attention to business that it will be to no purpose for me to enter on any other plan of proceeding than carrying on the recurrent daily business of office. It is very probable that this circumstance and the recency of my being in an office with which I could have had so very little opportunity to be acquainted, will occasion me to fall into some errors, and from which the general relaxation, to which I before alluded, will not help me to escape.

Upon examining the books in my office, there appears to me to have been a very careful attention to keeping them perfect in the mode prescribed ; but this mode, though it points immediately to every original document, is not calculated for an easy and ready comprehension of every duty ; and so immensely great is the mass of orders from earliest times to the present, on almost every subject, that the task of a digest, if at all practicable to accomplish, can be undertaken by extraordinary means only. Besides, should the least derangement be allowed in the present mode of keeping documents in this office, they would be thrown into confusion from which we could not recover ; but your digest—whenever you will allow copies of it to be furnished to the yards—will produce a most useful system of instruction, without occasioning the least derangement or deviation from the modes now in use. If you will allow a copy of your book (which is now kept in my desk) to be taken in this office, I shall still be under some difficulty either as to the length of time in making the transcript in the ordinary office hours, or as to the recompense to the transcriber for his extraordinary employment.

I hope that the orders which I have issued will check the improper licence to carrying things out of the yard, but clandestine pilfering embezzlements

will rest with the warders to detect, and with the reports of such I am almost daily disturbed. From my not being able to learn that there is authority for making any allowance to warders detecting embezzlements, I am led to suppose that such [an] obvious proposal must have been disapproved. I have desired the officers of the yard to meet me and communicate to me their ideas on the new contract for glazing; a shop will, I suppose, be indispensably necessary; but methinks it would be placed in a place more open to public view than in an obscure corner. No work of any kind should be done in it but for the king's service, and the persons employed in it approved by the yard officers, and in case of any malpractice by such persons, the contractor to be liable to penalty. If it should be thought advisable, generally in all cases, to establish the maxim that the superior is to be responsible for all defaults whatever by the inferior immediately under his superintendence, and a few examples made, much of the evil now existing would probably be remedied; but I find myself running to an unwarrantable length, and it is the more necessary that I should assure you of the great respect with which I am . . .

ROBT. FANSHAWE.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Hertford Street. 8th February, 1790.

Sir,—As I have now the mortification to find that no examination of the reports of the commissioners of enquiry is likely to take place soon, and that all the expectation I had formed of seeing the abuses rectified, which have been represented, and the proposed economy settled, before we began

our measures for reducing the expenses to a permanent peace establishment; and being convinced in my own mind, that it will be impossible for me, in the present disposition of the navy board, to effectuate any one measure tending towards it, or to prevent what has only hitherto been kept up by attention and diligence, from falling back again into irregularity and disorder; I am obliged to own, though with much reluctance, that I feel myself unable any longer to support so laborious a task as falls to my share, or continue any degree of responsibility, while the assistance necessary for discharging myself of it is denied me.

If no enquiry had been agitated, and the information which my experience enabled me to give the commissioners had been withheld, I should have continued in harmony with the whole department, and preserved a respect that had at all times enabled me to carry through any measures tending to the public good. The navy office, at the time the act passed, was in tolerable order, and my authority for managing the current business as firmly established as I could wish it. But, as soon as it was discovered that my opinions went to reformation of abuses, and to giving constant employment to a majority of members, who, in the present state of the board, go and come at pleasure, and have it in their power to obstruct rather than to prevent the business; when it was discovered that my sentiments inclined to a more equal distribution of duty, to the doing that by committees of members, which, though of the greatest importance, was entrusted to chief clerks; to the abolition of premiums on clerkships and improper fees, and to the adoption of other measures, clearly prudential, for conducting this great department with celerity, exactness and economy; when all

this was made public, I very early discovered a jealousy against myself, which I had never before experienced ; a jealousy which, from the encouragement it has received by the doubtful postponing of the reports, has put me into such a new and awkward situation, as renders me unable to bring forward any matter, beyond the mere current business of office, without opposition or hazard of success. This is my private reward for the conscientious disclosure of my sentiments.

The public effects are worse. The fees and emoluments in office, which were only guessed at before the enquiry was agitated, are now looked upon as established ; and from their having been suffered to remain so long after their discovery, without any one mark of disapprobation, are now considered as countenanced by government itself.

By these and other means, which I have no power to correct, the discipline of the office is become extremely relaxed, the attendance loose and uncertain, and the whole constitution of it, with respect to the just and efficacious discharge of duty, very much endangered. All these exorbitancies I must impute (and it is with pain that I do impute them) to the setting on foot an enquiry, apparently formidable in the beginning, into a department of such extent as the navy, and then suffering it to die away in silence, without one salutary remedy taken for the undeniable disorders which have been represented. And there is now this further aggravation of the evil—that it is impossible for any person, in the present state of the office, be his abilities or experience what they may, to carry on or continue the management of it with either satisfaction to himself or advantage to the community.

This consideration of the evils resulting from a lost enquiry is and must be peculiarly mortifying

to me, who, from motives of public concern, after having, during the experience of an extensive and complicated war, noted down every abuse, error, inaccuracy and obstruction to business, which the department is subject to; after forming returns, instructions, and checks for remedying them; after cutting off allowances that were abused, and many other needless expenses; after communicating the result of all my observations and experience to commissioners appointed by parliament for the sole purpose of enquiry, and, by the communication, raising a hornet's nest about myself; after seeing a system digested for the correction of the faults exposed, and, in my humble opinion, a very suitable arrangement framed for conducting the business with promptitude and exactness; after receiving encouragement to proceed upon consequent arrangements of this new system, and spending weeks and months in adjusting them—who, I say, after all this fatigue of mind and body, am now unfortunate enough to see myself deserted; all enquiry, all examination, whether of myself, or the commissioners, or of the reports, at an end;—under all these strange and unexpected circumstances taken together, I must be permitted to say, that nothing but the grossest insensibility to public and private welfare could prevent me, or any man of integrity in my situation, from being penetrated with the most mortifying concern.

If, indeed, I could satisfy my mind with the wages I might receive from the public, or with a careless discharge of my duty, or could be indifferent about it, there is no doubt of the facility of swimming with the stream, and of the practicability of such a conduct. But the office, in the meantime, must proceed from bad to worse; and the present development of disorders will be succeeded by

others, because none have been removed, till it is hard to say where the mischief will end.

The present enquiry and reports, the proposed reduction of expenses in the next year, the general expectation of some new measures in consequence, all invite and concur to mark the present period as the most proper and advantageous time for bringing this great business forward into a just determination. I will cheerfully lend my hand and the experience I have gained, to bring it forward with success ; and as I have no private views, but must encounter uncommon trouble and difficulties in the adjustment of this task, my offer ought to be considered as pure and disinterested. My own conscience tells me that it is ; for with regard to personal authority or pre-eminence, on which I know some not very candid reflections have been made, I most assuredly want none, but what is evidently necessary for carrying on the business and procuring for that end a proper attendance. If, in another view, I had sought, or were seeking, my own ease, the numberless papers I have written upon this subject, the weight of labour that must follow the adoption of my proposal, and the anxiety and consideration that will in that case fall to my share, might all have been avoided. To skulk from duty, instead of meeting it fairly, would have secured to me the tranquillity which others enjoy, without the risk of their censure.

It can be no wonder that I press my situation into view at this time. If the reduction of expenses into a permanent peace-establishment had been at a distance, or unlimited to a year, I should have waited with patient deference for the determination of the council on the reports. But as we have no more days to lose, and the time for providing, fixing and extending the previous measures through

all the branches of this vast concern presses exceedingly upon us, it becomes me, as a party pledged in so great a reduction, to consider my own credit as involved in this delay, and to declare myself incapable of continuing longer any degree of responsibility; and especially under the circumstance of being denied that assistance which is necessary to me for the discharge of it.

Having said this, I think it will be right for me to state briefly a few of the existing evils, under which the office must continue to act without a remedial arrangement.

1. The bringing a load of mixed business in a confused way before a board composed of so many members (who are designated indeed by the patent to particular branches, but who have business of all branches brought on before them altogether); and the whole of this business is necessary to be despatched, perhaps in the same day, while nothing can possibly be examined and considered as it ought.

2. The want of a sea commissioner, next in the patent to the comptroller, who, by his naval knowledge, is competent to connect and conduct the business when either duty or sickness obliges the comptroller to be absent. A ship builder from a dockyard is by no means equal to the present complicated business of the navy board (whatever might have been the case in its infancy) during the comptroller's absence; and in this circumstance, his absence,¹ even now, in time of peace, they who know the office understand very well what would soon become of the business.

3. The want of a secretary, properly established, to take charge of the correspondence.

¹ So in the MS. The meaning appears to be 'in the circumstance of his absence.'

4. The want of power in the person who conducts, to separate the business ; and in the board, to execute it by committees.

5. The necessity of leaving matters of the first consequence, and particularly accounts containing some hundred thousand pounds, to the sole examination of clerks.

6. The allowing clerks in office to act as agents for persons having accounts to pass in it.

7. The suffering presents and fees to be taken from contractors having stores to deliver or works to execute in the dockyards, by the persons appointed as a check on them.

8. The allowing so ill a practice as that of commissioners selling the vacant clerkships.

9. The bad arrangement of the business amongst the members of the board ; some having more to do than they understand, while others, fully understanding the same branches, have nothing to do in them.

10. The unequal and improper distribution of the departments.

11. The want of a surveyor of civil architecture, while tens of thousands of pounds are expended annually in improvements and buildings.

12. The uncertainty and remissness of attendance in office.

These, with many other exceptions and material defects, are more particularly pointed out in the report on the office and dockyards.

Defects like these, justified in a manner by being exposed without censure or correction, and thereby spurning at check or subordination, are not to be cured but by the first power, nor to be encountered now by anyone who means to conduct the business faithfully without rashness.

One single member, and he a shipwright from

the yards, directs all assortments and provisions of stores, for outports he has never seen, and for stations he does not know ; and yet the article of stores is one of the heaviest in naval expenditure. Can anything, then, be more expedient than the junction of a sea officer or two, acquainted with the particular exigencies of ships in foreign parts, with the surveyor ? It is not easy to reckon the convenience, as well as the saving, which would be made by it.

I am now revising and improving the returns, which I have established for the most part as checks upon the dockyards, the value of which is inestimable ; but when I have done I know not to what office or what hands to commit them for close examination, unless I know the determination of council. Much less do I know how to proceed in the reduction of expenses—though I have prepared many materials for the purpose—till the chief obstacles I have named are removed, and I can feel myself supported, as I ought to be, in a matter of so much importance.

And yet, in this state of debility, considerably increased by the enquiry, and under a system of management which must inevitably one day or other blow up, we are called upon to reduce our extra expenses between 3 and £400,000 per annum ; and, what is more, without allowing us the smallest aid, we are expected to proceed immediately upon it. But the impossibility of effecting or attempting this vast reduction or indeed of keeping within our present bounds, appears demonstrable from the numeration of the evils and defects I have exhibited.

But if these radical defects had been corrected, and economy established in the first instance,

respecting the several branches of the department ; if the necessary assistance pointed out in the reports had been allowed, and the requisite arrangements formed previously to our beginning the business, I should have had very little doubt in my own mind of seeing the reduction properly carried into execution. But as that has not been the case, and as I know, from the experience I have had, how very unequal I am to the share I must take in this reduction, as well as how far short my strength of body and mind is to contend with the labour and fatigue of managing an office under such a complication of unfavourable circumstances, almost bordering on anarchy, I have no way left to extricate myself but to resign it ; and this I would not do from disgust or personal disappointment, but, candidly and sincerely, from a deep sense of my own insufficiency to render the public in this respect any further service.

I thought it my duty to communicate this resolution to you, Sir, in the first instance, as it was owing to your partiality that I have so long continued in office.

*COMMISSIONER MARTIN TO
MIDDLETON*

Portsmouth Yard. 14th March, 1790.

My dear Sir,—I received your very kind favour at the moment I was stepping into my chaise, which was within an hour after Lord Chatham had signified to me the king's pleasure that I should be your successor ; otherwise I should have formally acknowledged how much I feel myself obliged by your friendly attention.

I am well aware, my dear Sir, with what disadvantage I shall fill that place, so ably, and with such distinguished honour, held by you for so many years; but I have ventured on the arduous task the more readily, from my experience of your liberality, and the constant flattering marks of your friendly attention to me; persuading myself you would give, what in such generous and kind terms you offer in your letter, and which I shall embrace with a just sense of the value of them, and with a grateful heart.

Being only this minute arrived, I have only time to add that I am, with every sentiment of regard and esteem, my dear Sir,

Your most faithful

and obliged humble servant,

HENRY MARTIN.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Hertford Street. 15th March, 1790.

Dear Sir,—I cannot quit an office, in which the honour of your approbation of my services has been no small encouragement to the continuance of my labours, without wishing to assure you that the motives of my resignation are by no means merely personal. I am so firmly persuaded (however erroneous my judgment may be) that the present situation of the navy office could afford me no means of continuing any longer useful, that I flatter myself with yours and Lord Chatham's candour in admitting the propriety of my resignation.

I shall not omit continuing my usual attention to the office till my successor is appointed, and shall be happy, if desired, to give him every in-

formation in my power towards accomplishing the proposed reduction of expenses.

I have the honour to be, with much respect and esteem,

Dear Sir,

Your most obedient and faithful servant,

CHAS. MIDDLETON.

RESIGNATION

[*Endorsed* : Reasons for resigning the office.]

[*Draft, in clerk's writing.*]

[1790.]

Lord Shelburne, immediately after his coming into office as first minister, consulted Sir Charles Middleton on the best means of procuring the knowledge of the fees and of correcting the abuses in the navy office. Sir Charles Middleton, having nothing so much at heart as this salutary measure, and having gone as far into this enquiry as his little authority would permit, was happy to answer such a disposition in a first minister, and earnestly employed himself in giving every kind of information and assistance in his power. He had done the same to Lord Keppel and Lord John Cavendish;¹ but the shortness of that administration, though well-intentioned towards a reform, precluded the possibility of carrying any measures of that kind into execution.

Lord Shelburne's administration had the same fate; but, as the hint had been given, and the propriety of the intention continually derived force from the enquiry, Sir Charles was led to improve it, as far as possible, to the public advantage; and from that time particularly investigated and brought

¹ Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Rockingham and afterwards in the coalition ministry; he died in 1796.

together the faults and abuses which existed in the civil department of the navy, and which, during the length of time he had conducted the business, had become more and more apparent to him.

As soon as the Act passed for making enquiry into the fees of the public offices, Sir Charles Middleton began to arrange the materials which his intimate knowledge and long experience of the subject enabled him to collect, and was prepared to communicate them to the commissioners by the time they reached the navy office in the course of their duty. He left to their investigation to prove the truth of these materials, and cheerfully lent his assistance, during the whole of their enquiry, for the discovery and correction of those abuses which it was the professed object of their commission to reform. He did not obtrude himself as an officious investigator, but believed himself answering the intentions of government and his own duty as a public servant by affording the commissioners every aid in his power.

Two reports were at length formed on the office and dockyards; and, from what he has seen of them, he must confess that they appear to him to have adopted the most energetic and judicious system, both for carrying on the business and correcting abuses, that could have been offered. For more than these two years past they have been before the council; but, notwithstanding every endeavour of Sir Charles Middleton, and the representation continually urged upon the minister and first lord of the admiralty that a reform was absolutely necessary before the reduction of expenses into a permanent peace-establishment took place; and having, as he thought, just before the king's illness, procured their attention and consent for carrying the two reports into immediate

execution—yet, from some causes or motives unaccountable by him, he has not been able, since his Majesty's recovery, to get them forward farther than one step, namely, their reference to a committee of council.

Finding, however, from the conversation of the minister and first lord of the admiralty, that a resolution had been formed by the king's ministers to put a negative upon them, and that no other plan, adequate to that reformation of abuses and proper conduct of the business which might have enabled him to make good the expectation of the public in reducing naval expenses into a permanent peace-establishment, would be adopted, he thought it a duty to his own reputation to resign an office, which by all the foregoing circumstances had been rendered embarrassing to him ; and especially as he had been drawn in to assist in forming what was once deemed a necessary, though now deserted reformation, the odium of which, from the interested views of the parties affected by it, has been invidiously thrown upon him ; but this office, thus circumstanced, he did not resign, before he had given notice upon notice of the many ill consequences which must ensue from delaying an investigation of the reports, and of the impossibility of his being useful, or of hoping to be useful, in the present disorderly state of the office.

It is but fair in this place to add, that, at the time of Sir Charles Middleton's resignation, the fleet is left in the best possible state ; the number of serviceable ships, the greatest ever known in this country ; the stores, appropriated to them, arranged in the most perfect order ; the arsenals filled with every kind of proper stores, to the value of two millions sterling ; three of the foreign yards completed since the peace, and the conveniencies considerably enlarged—the

Jamaica, in a state of great forwardness. The home yards are also in the greatest possible progress and even now ready for the most complete exertions. The use of copper has been established in all the branches to which it could be applied. In short, the remoter objects of the department are now in so fair a state, that nothing is wanting to perfect our naval economy, but the internal arrangement of the office itself respecting persons and their particular duties, in order to carry on business with life and despatch, and to correct the various abuses which the late enquiry has exposed, but which, from the discouragement the enquiry itself has received, have grown stronger than ever, if not confirmed.

Sir Charles Middleton would have been happy, in his ardent wishes for the public prosperity, to have devoted all his time and experience to these objects ; and indeed had gained so far on the marine minister as to procure the indulgence of a secretary, whose zeal and endeavours would have been correlative with his own ; but finding that no further arrangement was to be procured for all the great purposes in view, but, on the contrary, that the private ferment which had been raised against every kind of reform by those whose prejudice, whose ignorance, or whose particular interest, it was to oppose it, obtained all the attention, there remained no honourable alternative for either the comptroller or secretary, but to withdraw : and this step they have taken, not from any personal motives of disrespect or discontent, but from the pure conviction that it was impossible for them to serve with a desired effect for their country, and consequently with no comfort or credit for themselves.

MIDDLETON TO PITT

[*Copy—Autograph.*]

Teston. 17th May, 1790.

Dear Sir,—Having been a witness to the failure and discovery of several intended expeditions in the last war for want of timely preparations, I would submit to your judgment the propriety of having the squadron intended for the first expedition ready in every respect for sailing the first moment after you are determined to act; the field equipage, train of artillery, flat boats and baggage, shipped in this interval of leisure, and nothing left but the embarkation of the troops; the provisions for this expedition and the proper stores for the ships, to be provided and shipped, so as to follow them as soon as possible; and nothing left to accident that can be avoided by previous forethought. If the coppered transports are not ready or sufficient in number, let the king's ships leave behind a part of their war complement of seamen, and which may be sent after them, and take on board as many troops as they are able, so that they may act immediately on their arrival at the place of their destination. A 40-gun ship may be soon equipped for carrying ordnance stores and provisions; or one of the fitted store ships at Deptford and Woolwich may be employed on this service and return in time for carrying out sea stores to the stations; the other, to be loaded with made masts and other necessary articles for the squadron that accompanies the troops. Trust nothing to hired transports in the beginning of the war—nor afterwards—if possible, because the delays attending them, and the capture or loss of one, may be the ruin of the expedition. It must be considered that the Spaniards, though inactive and slow in their movements, are at least

a month before us in local situation for southern expeditions; and that the smallest article, if left to the time of sailing, will discover to office the object of the expedition; whereas making preparation a general practice, it avoids enquiry and eludes discovery. If anything is intended on internal lakes, and armed vessels intended to co-operate with the army thereon, they, as well as the gun-boats, should be immediately put in frame, and their stores, ordnance, and ammunition provided, and a vessel got ready for carrying them. I look upon expenses of this kind as absolutely necessary to insure success, and not to be spared. The king's ships, too, in the last war, after being coppered, in order to avoid discovery when ordered on foreign service, had the greater part of their stores always on board. The distinction is known at the navy board. By this means you may at any time detach reinforcements for the western squadron while at sea, and which is always the best method.

I beg pardon for having presumed to trouble you with these hints, and which I should have been tempted to do to Lord Chatham, but for the fear of giving jealousy to office, and knowing they would equally reach his lordship by this means if thought worthy of notice. I forbear adding others, because they do not appear so immediately necessary for the first setting off, but shall at all times be very ready and well inclined to give any information in my power that will either tend to your credit or the good of the king's service in the prosecution of the war, and which, considering the situation I was in during the whole of the last, will, I flatter myself, excuse me from the charge of presumption in offering it.

P.S. I should be very ready to offer my service in the charge of any expedition within my rank, but

that I know many others better qualified to be trusted with it; I am nevertheless at the disposal of Lord Chatham when called on.

Five or six thousand tons of common transports must be kept in readiness for growing services, and to lay at Portsmouth, preferable to the river in a Spanish war; but I would prefer the 40-gun ships fitted in this way for expeditions of every kind without the Channel. There are two bomb vessels fit for service in the river, and which I mention because expeditions are most likely to succeed at the first setting out, and were not thought of in the last war till the country was exhausted and the men required in all parts for defence; whereas a very little additional force in the beginning makes offensive operations as practicable as defensive ones, and with a certainty of success.

MIDDLETON TO LORD CHATHAM

[*Rough copy. Autograph.*]

6th October, 1793.

My Lord,—Since I had the honour of seeing your lordship, I have turned over in my mind the probable consequences that the present war will have upon the fleet, and the means which I should have suggested to your lordship for re-establishing it if I had been in the navy office at the conclusion of it. To suffer the fleet of England, from a state of the greatest strength and prosperity, to fall into a state of decline by a war that does not seem to call much for a continuance of employing the flower of our ships would, I am sure, not be to your lordship's mind; and yet I am confident it will have this effect, if the number of our line-of-battle ships, at this time employed, continue much longer in service. Should our consequence as a naval power be transferred by

these means to other powers, who may be, at this time, nourishing their fleets, it will at least be a mortification to this country, and probably bring censure on its naval administration. I know not whether these consequences may have struck your lordship as forcibly as they have done me, but I do not see how they can be avoided by any other means than calling in the line-of-battle ships, as they can be spared, and applying immediately afterwards to re-establishing them for service.

In this view, I have taken the liberty to suggest a few hints, and which is all that can be done without more particular information of the present state of the fleet; but they are such as may be built upon by any person in office, whom your lordship may entrust with this important branch of the service. To one who will make the subject of the fleet, in its general and particular state, a study, it will not prove a difficult one. To this person, your lordship must give full countenance, so that he may, under the sanction of the admiralty, be enabled to call for returns from the navy board as often as he shall see occasion; for, without such information and constant inspection, as well as a proper arrangement to be submitted frequently to your lordship, orders will, I know from experience, signify very little and become a dead letter.

In the navy board order-book will be found, the most particular instructions that can be given for keeping up and managing the ships in ordinary; and the returns on that and every other head were arranged in so regular a way, that the weekly, monthly and quarterly ones were sent, through the several clerks of the checks, to the navy office in their order; a particular clerk was appointed to receive and arrange them, and they were always brought to me for inspection before they were dis-

tributed amongst the other commissioners. Having had the forming of the greatest part of these returns, after many years of war experience, I can safely say, that they contain every kind of information necessary for the preservation of every branch of the fleet and keeping it in a state fit for service.

It is more peculiarly the province of the comptroller of the navy to keep this and every other branch of the service in constant view ; but, loaded as he necessarily is with other duties, he must be an extraordinary man in application and ability who can give proper attention to the whole and have the several parts in remembrance. The surveyors are men of too confined education and knowledge to have any views besides their common professional superintendence ; and as no one besides,¹ under the comptroller, can have authority sufficient to undertake this business at the navy board, I think it might be with propriety entrusted to the superintendence of one of the sea lords of the admiralty, without any offence to the navy board. It is of too much importance to be left at large, but the superintendence should be given to a person who will have a pride in executing it. Such knowledge at the admiralty will always be satisfactory to your lordship and give you confidence in the state of the fleet ; and it is the more necessary at this time, as we shall be in a new and awkward situation with regard to the fleet when the war ends, and our storehouses, which were full at the beginning of the war, will be found empty at the end of it.

I beg pardon for having troubled your lordship with so long a letter, but after your obliging communication when I was last at the admiralty, I could do no less than suggest what occurs to me on

¹ *Sc.* else.

the state of the fleet. When I know more particularly your lordship's views and intentions, I shall have great pleasure in making such observations on them as my knowledge of the subject may suggest; and whatever you may be pleased to instruct me with on this subject shall be buried with myself.

MIDDLETON TO CHATHAM

[*Fair Copy. Autograph.*]

Teston. 13th October, 1793.

My Lord,—As your lordship hinted the idea of sending some intelligent person in the civil line to Toulon, I have taken the liberty of sending one of the returns which I had made out for me when I visited the yards in 1785, as it may suggest to your lordship many articles of information which it may be desirable to procure while Toulon is in our possession; and I have added a few questions of my own which may be also useful to have answered.

I would at the same time submit to your lordship whether it might not be advisable to send out persons in each branch of the service, who are intelligent and likely to pick up information; viz. one in the shipwright branch and who has a command of his pencil; the draftsman who made the several sketches of the yard for your lordship, and assisted Mr. Pocock in his paintings of the dockyards; a storehouse clerk, who is master of our arrangements; a clever blacksmith, an intelligent caulker, and a mastmaker, as likewise a ropemaker. If a ship of war goes out, these men may go in her without any considerable expense to government, and are not of a kind to be missed from the duties of the yard. I am not acquainted enough with present characters, but I think such men might be the means of bringing drawings of everything

useful and wherein they may excel. The opportunity is favourable and it would be a pity to lose it.

ADDITIONAL QUERIES

Outer and inner Harbour

To have ground and perspective plans of each, distinguishing the several ports, and to what purposes they are used.

Storehouses and Magazines

The nature of them? How situated, and how disposed in the inside for the reception of stores? The distance they are from the wharfs?

Stores

The manner in which the stores are placed in the storehouses, distinguishing those for the present use of the yard, for the ships in good and bad condition? The proportion of stores that is kept in the magazines for ships in good condition and those wanting repair, giving a list of the articles? The proportion of stores kept in the yard for present use? Our proportion, when I left the navy board, was, three years' consumption of timber and one year's war consumption of every other article of store. Value at that time, including ships' stores, £2,100,000.

Ships

In what manner the ships out of commission are laid up; if in tiers at wharfs or tiers?

At what distance from each other?

How are they moored or fastened?

Are their masts in or out ?

Are their cabins and storerooms and magazines completed ?

If covered, and with what ?

The nature and quantity of ballast in each, and to what depth in the water are they sunk ; mentioning their sailing depth when ready for sea ?

If coppered while in ordinary ?

Their manner of coppering particularly described.

If the ships in good condition lay together, and what rules observed for their preservation ? If fire stoves used on board, as with us ?

If repaired in docks, or on slips, or by heaving down ?

If wharfs appropriated for heaving down ships ?

The number and the manner of constructing them ?

This is material for despatch, and I had always an idea of having some fitted in the Western yards.

The nature of the purchases ?

The number and quality of the ships belonging to this Port ?

How many built since 1783, and the sorts ?

How many repaired in the same time ?

Whether the worm injures the ships' bottoms ?

What preservation against it ?

If any stores kept on board the ships, and of what sort ?

The dimensions of their largest and smallest ships of each class, and also of their masts and yards ?

Docks and Slips

The number of docks ? Their dimensions, and for what classes of ships ?

The number of building slips, and for what classes of ships?

The manner of bottoming their docks and slips, and whether plank or stone?

If either slips or docks under cover, and for what purpose?

If the ships are suffered to continue on the slips after they are built, and how far completed, and how preserved?

If any of the docks are covered for caulking ships under them, or for what other purposes?

The height of such roofs?

Masts

In what manner are their masts constructed?

If of fir, and of what kind, or of what other timber?

If kept on board the ships, or on shore?

How are they preserved?

If mast-ponds, for the preservation of timber for masts?

If prevented by the worm from this method, how otherwise kept?

From whence are the masts and yards procured?

Building

From whence is the timber procured?

If brought into the yard formed or framed for use, and if customary to prepare it in this [way] in the forests, or procure it so formed from contractors or foreign merchants?

If any or what proportion is kept in a rough state?

If brought into the yard in the first state, how long may they be in constructing a ship of 74

guns, from the laying of the keel till she is fit to be launched?

Stores continued and Storehouses

From whence supplied with oak, elm, and fir or other timber; also plank, masts, yards, pitch, tar, hemp, copper, plates, bolts and nails?

Whether there is water enough at the quays to admit of the ship's stores, provisions and ordnance being put on board without the assistance of lighters or sailing craft?

What kind of mechanical machines are in use in the several parts of the yard, and for what purposes, with a particular description of each?

I could enumerate many other articles from which useful knowledge might be acquired; but as the return of the Portsmouth magazines will suggest what is wanting, I will no longer trespass on your lordship's time.

I shall be glad to have the storekeeper's minutes back at your lordship's leisure, as it is a part only of a set which I have by me.

In a few days I propose troubling your lordship with a few hints on the present state of the fleet, and which I should have done sooner, but have only returned here within a few days.

MEMORANDUM

[October, 1793.]

Ships and Cruisers

A list of our ships and cruisers should be drawn out and a proper arrangement made for the several ports and stations, also for convoys and for giving information. If the trading ports could be brought

to furnish men for the protection of certain districts, and which is not impossible, it will be a desirable acquisition ; but I would advise on no account to have armed ships ; they are a load of expense, seldom fit for service and never, in my remembrance, of any use. From this outline it will appear that a very great number of small craft will be necessary, and as there can be no necessity for increasing our line-of-battle ships in the present war, the king's yards, as well as the merchant ones, would soon furnish a sufficiency. If the idea of a short war should be an objection to this proposition, the answer is—who can tell ? and what is the expense compared to the object ?

The outline I have given, if properly filled up, will give protection to our trade, be a security to the coast, and leave a sufficient force for the dominion of the sea and covering embarkations. I have not time to enter into more particulars, but they will be at once obvious to experienced men ; and as the alteration of circumstances will require frequent changes, such changes will easily be effected if a general and well digested plan is established in the first instance.

[*Fair copy, in Middleton's writing.*]

[1793.]

Some observations on the present and future state of the fleet.

Navy board reports

It has always been the practice of the navy board to return ships to the admiralty in their weekly progress under the following heads.

1. Ships in good condition.
2. Ships wanting a small repair.
3. Ships wanting a middling repair.
4. Ships wanting a large repair.

I. Ships in good condition

Ships of this description are those who have been lately launched or undergone their full repairs. These ships may be generally relied on as fit for any service; and if the orders of the navy board are properly executed, and the storehouses regularly inspected by the visiting commissioners, their stores of every kind (a few trifling ones of a perishable nature excepted) will be found properly arranged in their berths, and lists accompanying them. These stores are marked with the ship's name to whom they belong, with a label which describes the date of their entrance, and are regularly issued to other ships of the same dimensions, and replaced with new ones, as often as they are ordered on service. By this means, and the common demands of the guardships and ports, the stores are always kept in good condition, and nothing suffered to run into waste.

Observation

If the nature of the present war should admit of lessening the number of line-of-battle ships now employed, I would submit to your lordship whether it might not be advisable to recall the best ships first, and particularly those of the first classes, in which the principal strength of the fleet lies, and to pay them off at such ports as may be consistent with the general state of the fleet and most convenient for future services. I would propose these ships to be immediately examined and caulked; and their store rooms, magazines and other internal wants, speedily repaired; their masts, yards and stores completed, agreeable to the navy board orders on that head, and to be reported in the weekly progress as complete for any service. If

to these ships are added the ships now building and under repair, you will have a respectable number of ships ready for any service at the conclusion of the war and without any considerable demand for extra service except stores which must be unequivocally recruited.

By this arrangement you will have time for going on with building and repairs, and be able gradually to increase the number of serviceable ships under a moderate annual demand for extra work. But if the best ships are kept in employment till the end of the war, and paid off and laid up promiscuously, we shall have an unserviceable fleet upon our hands, and without any means of extricating ourselves from the difficulties and confusion attending it. The stores that might be brought to account and made serviceable under the arrangement I propose, will be returned without any care and order, and lay to rot in the yards before they can be separated, and new ones demanded to replace them ; which must not only be attended with an enormous demand for extra service, but effectually prevent our providing for the current services of the yards, and which I am afraid will be found exhausted at the end of the war.

II. *Ships requiring a small repair*

If the nature and progress of the war will admit of a further reduction of the ships in service, I would submit the propriety of recalling ships who are likely to fall under this description and which may be known by looking at the time when they were last repaired, the nature of the repair, and how they have been employed since. These ships should be distinguished in the progress as ships wanting a small repair, but in the meantime fit for home and

short services. They should be immediately caulked and undergo their annual trimmings, their stores completed in the most material articles, and continue in that condition till the shipwrights can be spared from the ships in good condition and under immediate repair. As fast as these are completed, the ships now under consideration should undergo a more close examination, and be brought forward in preference to all other works. By this method, the number of serviceable ships will be considerably and speedily augmented, and the fleet in the meantime be in a condition for any exigency that may offer.

III. *Ships requiring a middling repair, and now in service*

These appear to me, having a reference to a re-establishment of the fleet, to be the proper ships to be continued in service, and will least interfere with the repair of it. There may be an exception to ships serving in the East Indies and on long winter cruises at home, but to none other as far as my judgment reaches; and as the situation and reduction of the French fleet will allow of the selection I have mentioned, it would be a pity to lose the opportunity it gives us of strengthening ourselves. It must be remembered that at the end of the last war we had a fleet of ships building in the merchant yards, and which enabled us in the course of a few years to bring forward a very formidable fleet. We have no advantage of this kind now, and therefore must be cautious in the management of the ships we have, as we shall otherwise be in a very weak state when the war is ended, and without any apparent reason for it.

Frigates

I am afraid from the nature of the war, there is little hopes of our being able to spare any of the frigates. It may, therefore, be necessary, at the end of it, to build in the merchant yards, and which should be done in the way practised for line-of-battle ships, by long seasoning in their frames. The frigates now repairing there, ought, by all means, to be wore out in service, as they will otherwise wear themselves out in ordinary and deceive your expectations, if trusted for service.

War with France

From a general consideration of the subject, the following thoughts have occurred :

France

The French being much inferior to us in the number of line-of-battle ships, and probably deficient in the great articles of naval stores, their first object will be a general attack upon our trade and supplying themselves by these means of what may be difficult to procure other ways.

Line-of-battle ships

Their interest will not be to appear at sea with fleets, but in numerous and active squadrons proportioned to the object they may have in view ; and to keep in their ports, ready equipped for sea, and with officers and stores, but with very small complements of seamen, such ships as may not be in a condition for sea service, but sufficiently safe for covering embarkations, and in force enough to oblige us to keep up a considerable fleet of observation.

They will probably have flying squadrons in the East Indies, strong enough to intercept our China and India ships, and may attempt, at an early period of the war, the capture of St. Helena and the Cape. They will have similar squadrons at such of their islands as are most in their favour, and best situated for annoying our West India trade ; and by cruising to windward, across the latitudes of the Leeward Islands, from ten to fifty leagues easting, and to the northward of them at the same distance, they will there intercept the greatest part of the trade going to and from these Islands. The Newfoundland fishing will be a principal object, and, as it is confined to a certain season of the year, will on our part require much attention. The Quebec trade, from its situation, will probably suffer from the cruisers employed here ; and as their cargoes coming from thence are often rich, they will become an additional object for the enemy to attend to. The African trade, if continued, will fall under the same danger as the West India Island trade ; and Nova Scotia, as of that of Newfoundland and Canada. The Baltic ships, being pretty much confined in their return to the months of July, August and September, and their cargoes of great moment in a naval war, will be objects of the first magnitude to the French, for supplying themselves and depriving us of naval stores. For masts, pitch, and tar, they will look to America and for some hemp to Italy and the south of France.

Home trade being numerous, and carried on in unarmed vessels, will be subject to the activity of privateers of all classes ; and the openings into the Channel and North Sea will be stations of their frigates and larger cruisers.

England

In a war of this kind, which I cannot look upon in any other light than a war against trade, and where a very large number of trading vessels are to be protected, many losses will be sustained under the best management, and a thousand complaints arise amongst the merchants and opposers of government against the minister who conducts the measures. To guard, however, as much as possible against any material losses and to protect our trade and coasts against designs of the enemy, it will be necessary to have a very large number of frigates, sloops, brigs and cutters, and no more line-of-battle ships than are sufficient to overawe those of the enemy and cover your own coasts, islands and embarkations. It will be necessary that the ports of Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sheerness and Chatham and the Thames be properly attended to. Each of these ports should have an admiral who understands arrangement, possesses activity and skill in his profession, and will [be] firm in his conduct. Without these qualifications, much of our home force will be thrown away in our harbours, and the seamen improperly distributed amongst the prizes. It is not sufficient to have one commander-in-chief at Sheerness; for the Medway and Chatham being a fitting port for ships under repair and commissioning, a superintending sea-officer is necessary to that port; while the one at Sheerness will have enough on his hands in attending to the distribution of men at the Nore, and to the forwarding the refitment of the cruisers that are continually coming into Sheerness. The Downs will require a good head, an active mind, and much professional skill. The Thames will naturally fall under the admiralty

board, of which I shall say a few words, as every kind of exertion and arrangement must necessarily centre there.

As the spirit of all naval equipments and the success of the fleet must depend upon the vigilance and conduct of the admiralty,—I would propose not less than three seamen being employed there as commissioners: one to examine and report on the correspondence with the navy board, victualling and sick-and-hurt; a second to examine weekly accounts, weekly progresses, returns from rendezvous, and the general fitting out of ships; and a third to examine journals, log books, admirals' arrangements of ships under their command, and home arrangements under the admiralty. These three gentlemen will find full employment for their time and must therefore submit to close application. By such an arrangement at the admiralty, and the offices, much activity will be given to the discipline and exertion of the fleet, and few omissions will escape their notice; whereas, in the usual way of having no sea-officers to examine those momentous branches which I have mentioned, duty at the ports has always gone on in a languid, sleepy way, without discipline and without exertion; the cruisers have been suffered to idle away their time in ports, and the subordinate officers left entirely to the discretion of those who conducted them.

CAPTAIN PHILIP PATTON TO MIDDLETON

INTRODUCTORY

Philip Patton, born in 1739, at Anstruther, near Kirkcaldy, in Fife, had, possibly, a wider experience of war and active service than any officer then living; that is to say, he had served continuously through war and peace

since his entry into the service in 1755. He was with Boscawen at Louisbourg in 1758, and at the defeat of De la Clue in 1759; continuing in the *Namur*, he was at Quiberon Bay, and again, at the reduction of Havana in 1762. As a lieutenant, he was with Middleton in the *Prince George*; and, in the same ship as flag-captain to Rear Admiral Digby, he was in Rodney's action off Cape St. Vincent and in Sir Charles Hardy's cruises in the summer of 1779. During the rest of the war he commanded the *Belle Poule* frigate in the North Sea, for the protection of trade, and incidentally, in the battle on the Doggerbank. Middleton, to whom his nationality was, no doubt, a favourable introduction, had known him as a lieutenant and appreciated him as a deep-thinking, hard-fighting officer, and when at the admiralty in 1794 had him appointed a commissioner of the transport board, where—it is said—he was found so useful that Lord Chatham, in the following year, endeavoured to persuade him to continue in the office, instead of taking his flag; and threatened, that if he insisted on having his flag he should not be employed. He did insist, and was not employed either by Lord Chatham, or by his successor, Lord Spencer. On the renewal of the war in 1803 he was appointed, by Lord St. Vincent, second in command in the *Downs*, under Lord Keith, and in 1804—not improbably through the influence of Middleton—was called to a seat at the admiralty, which he continued to hold under Middleton himself, as Lord Barham, during 1805. The Trafalgar promotion made him an admiral, but he had no further service, and died at Fareham—where he had lived during these later years—in December 1815. Entering the navy just before the beginning of the Seven Years' War, he finally left it just after the beginning of the long peace.

His letters are all holographs, in a clear hand, which it is a pleasure to read.

Sheerness. 29th January, 1784.

Dear Sir,—I have at last finished the signal book and shall send it you by the first good opportunity I have.¹ You will find my explanation of

¹ No copy of Patton's book of signals has yet been found.

Mr. Ramsay's signals on a loose sheet at the end ; and also private signals, nearly upon Lord Howe's plan, which may be pointed out by a common signal. Since finishing I have begun to prepare another book for a fair copy, with a leaf between each flag for general orders to which there are signals to refer, and which cannot be done by any other plan of signals. With these included, it contains the whole of what is contained in Admiral Kempenfelt's two books. I shall also send you the blank signal book ruled and prepared for the writing, which you can have done if you shall think proper ; if not, you can give it me again at some future time, as I shall have it filled up for myself. I know that the shocking confusion in public affairs¹ must put a stop to all improvement for the present and perhaps for some time to come.

When the weather becomes more moderate you will perhaps have an opportunity of consulting about the wine.

I always am, with the most perfect regard, dear Sir,
Your most sincere and obedient,
PHILIP PATTON.

Sheerness. 4th February, 1784.

Dear Sir,—When the frost breaks up I shall endeavour to get the wine conveyed as you propose, and shall write Mr. Harding before I send it.

The signal books you will receive from Mr. Pennal, master of the *Discovery*, navy transport, who is also the bearer of this letter. No plan of signals can be conceived to which objections may not be made ; I shall only repeat the three principal advantages of these. The first is the small number

¹ *Sc.* following on the summary dismissal of the coalition ministry (18th Dec. 1783) and the formation of Pitt's government with a minority in the House of Commons.

of flags necessary; the second, the advantage of making the signals by two different methods, without previous notice; and, in the last place, the simplicity of the arrangement by which the signals and explanations are seen at one view without reference or retrospect.

With real regard, I am, . . .

Burntisland. 29th October, 1786.

Dear Sir,—I was very glad to see by the newspapers some time ago that the sphere in which you might serve your country was extended, yet I felt some regret at the effect it might have in drawing some part of your attention from what is but too much neglected. I mean the future management of our naval force. For next to the existence of ships is the management of them in the defence of this island. I don't know whether we still continue to instruct foreigners in all we know, but I see that we continue to confine the knowledge of those who must guide ships and fleets at sea to harbours only. It always appears to me that in a very few years there will be sent forth annually about three hundred men, nominally qualified for lieutenants and captains, who cannot possibly have the least conception of or judgment in the motion of a ship.

Since I wrote you last I have turned my whole attention to signals, of which almost every action last war proved the miserable confusion and deficiency; and I have made some progress in making a very much improved copy of my own system, to which I think I have removed every objection, by every part of the signal being made at the same place, and by adding much to the perspicuity of the explanations, without adding to their length. I have troubled you with this letter

that I may either amend your copy if you choose to send it down here, or get one sent you from hence in case at a future period any use might be made of them.

Mrs. Patton joins me in the most sincere wishes for yours and Lady Middleton's happiness, and I always am,

Dear Sir,

Your most faithful and obliged

PHILIP PATTON.

*Observations on Lord Hood's Signals*¹

[*In Middleton's hand.*]

January, 1788.

If no written or printed directions or explanations attend them, many parts are far from being sufficiently clear. Through the whole, too much knowledge of the subject is taken for granted, and the object in forming them seems to have been to collect necessary significations, rather than to render these significations clear and intelligible to the persons who were to act by them. The best method, however, of obtaining significations is to select them from the signals of all the officers who have commanded in chief, and insert them in whatever plan is approved.

This plan is defective and liable to many objections, the principal of which are:—That it requires too many flags, above thirty being necessary.

That it is very unfit for distant signals, as a mistake of the colour of any flag gives a quite different signification, and the place where hoisted does not lead to correction. The three masts of ships

¹ No copy of Lord Hood's signals has yet been found. It appears from Admiral Gower's note (*ante*, p. 288) that they were printed by Messrs. Mount and Page.

cannot be, in many situations, all seen ; by which, as the word distant is indeterminate and subject to difference of opinion, they will be mistaken for signals when colours are to be considered ; and colours can frequently be seen distinctly, and consequently a signal, before the mizen mast is raised out of the water.

The next objection is the uncertainty produced by renewing the same number three different times, for which there seems to have been no occasion ; as carrying on the numbers would have saved the necessity and rendered the whole more simple and easy of comprehension.

The last objection to be mentioned is :—An almost total want of arrangement and method in the book. The division of port duty, sailing etc., and fighting, is by no means a specific distinction, which it is intended for, because many of the sailing are absolutely necessary in the fighting signals, notwithstanding the many repetitions of the same significations in the two grand divisions. And all these objections subsist, supposing that there are explanations to be added, which are indispensably necessary to avoid the most fatal errors. His lordship has added what is absolutely necessary in all plans—a mode by which a private ship, not possessed of his flags, may, in his opinion, command the fleet in the absence of flag ships ; but a very slight examination will discover that those means are insufficient for the purpose, and in many cases which may occur quite impracticable.

The night and fog signals are amongst the worst I ever saw and would be productive of certain separation.

Middleton to (?) Patton

[Autograph copy.]

[Not dated.]

Dear Sir,—The more I consider the situation of the fleet, the more I am convinced of the necessity of confining your movements to the old Fighting Instructions, and which are certainly better adapted to fleets who fight on an equality than the more modern craze. Simple movements, with the assistance of good leading ships, are within the reach of the meanest capacity ; but when additional signals are given out without system or order, as I am afraid is the case with all those I have yet seen, it must only bewilder the judgment and increase the confusion.

You will excuse, therefore, my repeating what strikes me forcibly : that a facility of forming and tacking the line seems to comprehend the whole of what is necessary at present. In my early days I cruised a good deal¹ with Sir John Norris, and I think he seldom made any other movements. All I fear at present is the confusion of our signals ; but however bad they may prove, they will do no harm if left asleep, and however ignorant our commanders may be at setting out, their seamanship will give them great advantages in forming and keeping the line as soon as they have been practised so as to understand it.

¹ A comparison of Middleton's sea-time (*ante*, vol. i. p. x) with the chronicle of the year (Beatson, i. 84) shows that this 'good deal' was limited to three months, when he was 15, and at sea for the first time. The reference, however, shows that he was actually in the Duke (*cf. ante*, vol. i. p. xi).

Patton to Middleton

Kirkcaldy. 4th August, 1788.

Dear Sir,—Your situation certainly renders you the best judge of the inconveniency attending making the signals public, and I can see the risk they run from envy or misapplication. I can also very readily perceive the objections to the lord you mention,¹ whose character and pursuits I know too well not to see that he is not calculated to convey anything of this kind to the public, even if he had never produced a plan of his own.

The arguments which occurred to me against trusting entirely to the prince,² were the uncertainty of his character, and the time which will probably elapse before he can have influence or power; not to mention how little qualified I find myself to render what I may do agreeable to a person who must be constantly beset with those who administer to his passions and court his favour at any expense. But as you think that this is clearly the channel to be preferred, I shall certainly acquiesce in your opinion and wait at least till his arrival in England, or till you shall think the opportunity favourable.

Before the signals were printed, I had an idea that the most proper means to make them known would be to send a copy to every admiral upon the list, accompanied with the sketch which I wrote to elucidate the subject; but this idea I relinquished when the book was printed, as it would take so many copies. By a letter, I should have explained that I did not presume to suppose my system free from objection and error; but that it might be

¹ Presumably Lord Howe.

² Prince William Henry, who, as a midshipman, had been with Patton in the *Prince George*.

found to be attended with some new and particular advantages which I submitted to their consideration during peace, the most proper time for deliberate examination. This mode of publication might have prevented a possibility of others claiming what had been suggested in my plan, and it might have led toward some decided opinion upon its value.

I have continued my application to the schedule, and have made considerable progress. In several places I have discovered room for improvements in the methodical business and more perfect knowledge of a fleet, and I hope to render it useful to the most experienced officers by aiding the memory and recollection at those times when they require most to be delivered from oppression ; when I have got it copied fair, I shall send it for your perusal or printing, as you may think proper, being always, with real regard,

Dear Sir,

Your very faithful and obedient,

PHILIP PATTON.

Titchfield. 18th August, 1790.

Dear Sir,—My father's¹ age and the state of his health having rendered his life uncertain, and as he has expressed some anxiety to see me, I think of setting out with my family for Scotland, by way of London, about the beginning of next week. Indeed I do not at present perceive any advantage which is likely to arise from my continuing longer in this part of the country, as I have not experienced any attention from those who are in power, in any way whatever. I waited upon the Duke of Clarence the day he arrived at Portsmouth, but I had no conversation with him which

¹ His father, also Philip, had been collector of Customs at Kirkcaldy.

might correspond with [the] contents of the letter which he wrote me.

I have had a slight glance of Lord Howe's new plan of signals, which report says are intended to be established from authority. They resemble those which Admiral L. Gower used upon his cruise with the guard ships,¹ which were also his lordship's. This new plan is entirely numerary, upon the same principles with Lord Hood's, and they require at least 20 flags, besides 7 divisional flags and several pennants. The significations and instructions are in my L. H——'s usual language.

Titchfield. 23rd August, 1790.

Dear Sir,—As my father is rather better in his health and has signified his wishes that I should defer my journey to Scotland, I have resolved not to go down at present. Indeed, the extent of the armament makes me desirous of remaining in this part of the country till something is determined.

I do not know if I ever informed you that I had a very civil letter from Lord Hood, in October last, respecting the signals; with a long apology for not acknowledging the receipt of the book sooner, and concluding with saying 'that they must have cost me much labour, as from the very cursory view he had been able to take of them they appeared to be arranged with much care and correctness.'

How far Lord Howe's may be approved, upon the trial which is now making of them, is difficult to say; but they appeared to me, upon a slight view, to be more defective in significations, although not more perspicuous, either in the arrangement or the language, than the plans which

¹ In the summer of 1788. It may be remembered that Gower's assiduous practice with these signals made him somewhat unpopular.—Cf. *N.R.S.* xxxi. 65.

have been already used. I have been told that his lordship was at some pains to obtain the approbation of some of the admirals about town, before he brought them to Portsmouth ; which, I understand, he had also obtained to that plan which was used by Admiral L. Gower in his cruise with the guard ships, and to which the present is very similar. These sanctions, given by flag officers, may in some measure account for the silence of several of those gentlemen to whom my book was sent. . . .

Tichfield. 21st December, 1790.

Dear Sir,—I had a slight look of Lord Howe's signal book on board one of the ships at Spithead in August last ; and afterwards I had a lieutenant's signal book, formed from it, some days in my possession, from which I took the significations in the short plan which I sent you ; but I have very lately had an opportunity of examining my lord's latest edition, delivered to the ships in October, with attention ; and as you was to look at his system, I have sent you the observations which I have made upon it, which may save you a good deal of trouble.

Besides the signal book, I have seen all the orders, instructions, orders of sailing, lines of battle &c. &c., which were delivered to the ships of his fleet ; and if anything were necessary to show that signal books formed upon confined plans, such as his lordship's, were quite unfit to guide a large fleet, ten sheets of printed and written paper of explanations and instructions issued by him will prove it, I should think, even to his own conviction.¹

These sheets of paper contain orders, explanations &c. which are already in my large signal book, or they are such as could have been easily added

¹ See *N.R.S.*, xxxv. pp. 316 sq.

without deranging anything ; and from the necessity Lord Howe has been under of making these voluminous additions—almost equal to his instruction book—I am more and more confirmed in the superior advantages of my large plan of signals.

With great regard I always am,

dear Sir,

your very faithful and obedient,

PHILIP PATTON.

Tichfield. 23rd January, 1791.

Dear Sir,—I have been ill for some time past of a rheumatic complaint, but of which I am now considerably better. It however prevented my acknowledging the receipt of your letter, which gave me the very great pleasure of knowing that my opinion is agreeable to yours on the subject of Lord Howe's signals, and it affords me new proofs of your most obliging attention and partiality.

I have considered, with the greatest care, what you have been so good as to say about the Duke of Clarence, but I must acknowledge that I have very little hopes from that quarter. He did not take the least notice of the schedule nor of the letter which accompanied it, till I wrote to Captain Pole, seven months after the prince had received it ; nor when I saw the duke at Portsmouth, did he say a word either of it or the signals. Some officers here have seen my copy of the schedule and approve of it very much, and anybody must have observed that it could not have been done without considerable labour. These are not circumstances favourable to new applications, nor do I find myself by any means qualified to make a figure among his personal connections.

I have for some time past resolved to go down to Scotland with my family in the spring ; and when

I consider the approbation which I understand had been bestowed by many admirals upon Lord Howe's signals, and the neglect with which the greatest part have received my book, I acknowledge that my hopes of success are so much damped, as leaves me little reason for deferring my journey upon such prospects.

A small fleet may be managed by almost any plan of signals; the difficulty lies in conducting a large one. My book is constructed for the greatest fleet, and I shall be sorry if it does not get a trial; but I see no farther means of obtaining it. I am afraid Admiral K. Stewart¹ will have some person to please in this way, and that your obliging endeavours will fail. I must rest satisfied with having done what I could, and I shall never be insensible of your friendship and goodness. Mrs. Patton joins me in wishing you and Lady Middleton constant and uninterrupted happiness, being always

Titchfield. 5th April 1791.

Dear Sir,—I had resolved to go to London in my way northward this week, but having made the usual tender of my services upon this armament, I have been induced to defer our journey for some little time, though I see no reason to expect employment.

Upon hearing of the destination of a fleet to the North Sea or Baltic, I wrote to Mr. Martin (with whom my brother Charles had sailed), that he was well acquainted in those seas, and in consequence of that letter, he is appointed to the *Camel*, store

¹ A younger son of the 7th Earl of Galloway. He commanded the *Formidable* in the armament of 1790 and was promoted to the rank of rear-admiral on 21st Sept., but had not hoisted his flag. As an admiral he had no service, and died on 3rd March, 1795.

ship, at Deptford ; and this, I hope, may give him a chance of being made post in the course of the summer.¹

I understand that there has been an examination of Lord Howe's and Lord Hood's plans of signals by some flag officers convened for that purpose, and that their decision has been in favour of Lord Howe's, which, it is said, are therefore to be used at present in the navy. In such an examination, I think such a decision might have been expected ; and I rather wonder that Lord Hood should have submitted to it in the present state of affairs. I have not seen my Lord Hood's signals lately, so that I cannot judge how far they may have been improved.

Kirkcaldy. 1st February, 1792.

Dear Sir,—The means you have suggested for providing a proper plan of signals for the navy are almost exactly what I had conceived to be necessary. I have accordingly made a sketch of what would probably be effectual, which is sent enclosed. It is but too evident what would be the qualifications of the committee, if they were appointed in the usual manner. I have therefore proposed an unusual mode, which might obtain an impartial choice by the only judges. I see the great advantages of the committee being continued for other purposes ; but if they were to be selected by parliamentary interest, their ignorance of the business would probably prevent any material service to the state ; but if the choice by ballot should not be relished for interested reasons, I hope the books will be deemed necessary, and to them there appears to be no reasonable objection. It seems to be strangely

¹ He was not made till 30th May, 1795.

absurd to trust the report upon the merits of a system of signals to vague assertions in words, and perhaps the words of only one man. By such reports, the most defective system, conveyed in an unintelligible language, might be established. I have confined the books to be kept, to the admirals and captains ; but perhaps a lieutenant in each ship should also be ordered to keep one, and be directed not to communicate with the captain in marking it. If such books had been kept during former trials of signals and signed by the officers who kept them, a much more determinate idea could have been formed of the merit of those systems ; and by such books, one plan could be compared with another at any distance of time, shewing, at the same time, how far the trial had been extended. The books appear to me to convey so much information that bare mention of such means will be sufficient to recommend them.

The pamphlet¹ of Admiral Keppel's action will now very soon appear. I hope Lord Chatham and Lord Hood will see it. If anything will open their eyes to the importance of the subject, this little publication will have that effect ; but if it should not succeed with men in power, it may have some effect with the public, to whose opinion they must bend at last, and the sooner the better for themselves. Sir John Call² has directed your two last letters to my brother Charles by mistake.

¹ This pamphlet is not known and cannot be traced.

² Best known as a military engineer and artilleryman ; but from 1786 was associated with Middleton on a parliamentary commission to inquire into the state of crown lands, woods and forests. His directing or misdirecting Middleton's letters appears to have been entirely officious.

Enclosure 1

Sketch of a plan for securing to the navy the best system of signals that can be procured.

A proposal at great length and in needless detail, that a committee of fifteen should be chosen by ballot—in the way now familiar, but then, it would seem, little known—by all the flag officers and captains on the list; and that this committee—of which no one who had proposed a system of signals (e.g. Lord Howe) could be a member—should select the three proposed systems which it considered the best. That an experimental fleet, of not less than thirty sail, should be sent out under a commander-in-chief and at least six other flag officers; that all these and the several captains were to keep signal logs ruled according to pattern, with columns for remarks and criticisms written in at the time, and that, full trial having been made of the three selected systems, the books were to be sent to the committee, who, on them, should base their report to the admiralty—‘declaring under their hands, which of the three systems is most proper to be established for the future management of the navy of Britain.’

Enclosure 2

[The ruled pattern of the proposed signal logs.]

Kirkcaldy. 21st March, 1792.

Dear Sir,—I have received great pleasure from the account of your conversation with Lord Chatham, and am perfectly convinced that everything is done which can be done at present to obtain a proper system of signals for this country. The view of the action of the 27th of July [1778] being before the public at this time, may perhaps have some weight in preventing any very glaringly partial measures. It shows the importance of the subject in a strong light; and if the admiralty establishes signals with-

out due consideration and proper trial they must do it with some risk.

As a new edition of the *Naval and Military Memoirs*¹ will very soon be called for, a more accurate account of the present made you at Barbados will be inserted; and if anything should occur to you with regard to the conduct or management of the last war which is not likely to come to the knowledge of the author, and which should be laid before the public, I can get it properly inserted in the volumes upon which he is now employed and which are in great forwardness.

Kirkcaldy. 24th June, 1792.

Dear Sir,—I have taken some time to consider maturely the contents of the letter to Lord Chatham, as it is possible that it may be shown about, or be seen hereafter. I send what I think might do, enclosed; but if you should judge any alterations necessary, pray be so good as to make the remarks freely, and send them, that another letter may be written. But if you should think too much time may be lost in writing me, it can be enclosed in a cover and sent to his lordship. As I have heard nothing of Mr. Pulteney² for these six months I am doubtful if he can be got to deliver the letter. Mr. Cleghorn has been written to upon this subject, but some time may be lost in waiting for his answer.

In one part of my letter to Lord Chatham, you will observe that I allude to the letters which I wrote you respecting signals when I was in Sir Charles Hardy's fleet³ which is the proof mentioned.

¹ Beatson's. The first three volumes were published in 1790.

² Possibly William Pulteney, M.P. for Shrewsbury. Mr. Cleghorn was not in Parliament.

³ 1779; in the Prince George with Digby.

Is it impossible to get a copy of the signals which are now to be tried? It might be of the utmost consequence to have some remarks made upon them as early as possible, as by that means a stop might be put to their final establishment, if they are not such as ought to manage the navy.

Kirkcaldy. 29th June, 1792.

Dear Sir,—I have this morning received a letter from Mr. Cleghorn, dated 25th inst., who says:—‘The evening is so far advanced that I must delay calling on Mr. Pulteney till to-morrow; I have not the least difficulty in requesting Mr. Pulteney to convey your letter to Lord Chatham; if his lordship and he are upon good terms (and I know of nothing to the contrary); I would fain hope that he will have no difficulty to comply with this request. He always mentions, with the highest praise, your system of signals, and your correspondence with me on that subject is all in his hands’ &c. He adds—‘that I may depend upon hearing from him to-morrow;’ but as it will be two posts after this before I can write again (by no letters going from hence on Saturday), I have been induced to inform you of the chance which has appeared of having the letter to Lord Chatham delivered by Mr. Pulteney.

From the general tenor of Mr. Cleghorn’s letters to me, I should have concluded that Mr. Pulteney would have spoken to Lord Chatham upon the subject of my signals long before this time, but I suppose he has not seen the necessity of an early application, nor has he been aware of the consequences of the trial of Lord Howe’s, which probably excludes all others.

Titchfield. 2nd June, 1794.¹

Dear Sir,—Although I am very far from considering myself capable of suggesting anything of consequence upon a subject of so much magnitude as the disposition requisite for the defence of the trade, yet, as you desire it, I have weighed with attention the different modes which have been practised of protecting the Channel trade and coast of Scotland, and of annoying the enemy's cruisers; and my general idea is—That, off every port of the enemy, capable of admitting ships of force, a squadron should be kept constantly cruising; and that this squadron should be of such force as certainly to capture the enemy's ships if they should venture upon action. In my opinion, these British squadrons should consist of such a number of ships as would admit that a fourth, or third, part of each of them should be able to go into the nearest port to refit, to victual, or to store; and the remaining three-fourths, or two-thirds, should be of such force as still to have a decided superiority over the enemy. It appears to me that a much smaller force, employed in this manner, will be effectual in annoying the enemy, than if squadrons were sent to find them after they had gained the stations upon which they were to cruise.

This mode of defending ourselves and of annoying the enemy has had the sanction of experience and successful precedent to recommend it. Keeping the enemy's ships effectually blocked up in their own ports was the practice in the war which ended with 1762,² particularly during the

¹ Middleton, since the 12th May, was senior sea lord of the admiralty.

² Patton, it will be remembered, had personal experience of this service under Hawke and Boscawen.

late Lord Chatham's splendid administration; and though such an example was not followed during the last war (perhaps for want of sufficient force), yet surely it may now be successfully pursued. But, in addition to the mode generally stated, I would propose that a two-decked line-of-battle ship and a large frigate should be kept constantly sailing from the Downs to the Land's End, and from the Land's End to the Downs, backwards and forwards, as fast as the wind would admit, having occasional intercourse with the commanding officers stationed off the different French ports in the Channel.

I mention commanding officers, for, in my opinion, each of the different squadrons cruising off the enemy's harbours should have a separate and distinct commander, who should receive orders from the admiralty only. This occurs to me as proper, because, the interest of a general commander over several distinct squadrons, does not always coincide with the interest of the public; but the interest of the admiralty and that of the country is always the same. A line-of-battle ship and a frigate, thus employed, would give countenance and support to the smaller cruisers upon our own coast and secure, in a great measure, the coasting convoys from the attacks of the enemy's frigates, which might have escaped the vigilance of the frigates stationed off their ports. This is my general idea with respect to the British Channel; but to illustrate it more fully I shall make a few suppositions with respect to the enemy's force within Ushant, and show what I conceive to be the strength which ought to be opposed to it, so as to block up all their ports as effectually as the season of the year, and other circumstances, would admit.

Suppose the enemy To these might be
had at Dunkirk opposed

Frigates	Guns		Frigates	Guns	
2 of 36	=72	} Fit for sea	2 of 38	=76	} Of which 225 guns always off the enemy's port.
1 of 32	=32		2 of 36	=72	
2 of 24	=48		2 of 28	=56	
2 of 20	=40		2 of 24	=48	
1 of 10	=10		3 of 16	=48	
Total	202 guns		Total	300 guns	

Supposing the enemy had at Cherbourg frigates mounting 368 guns, to these should be opposed frigates mounting 490 guns; and if they had at St. Malo frigates mounting 400 guns, to these should be opposed frigates mounting 534 guns. Of these different British squadrons, stationed off the ports of Dunkirk, Cherbourg, and St. Malo, one quarter of each squadron might be in the nearest port refitting, victualling or watering, and a sufficient strength still be opposed to the enemy; at the same time that sufficient relaxation would be afforded to the officers and seamen, as they would, in this case, be one month in four in port.

I have, in all these suppositions, opposed frigates to frigates (meaning single-decked ships), because, whatever may have been said with respect to the sailing of 2-decked and 3-decked ships, I am convinced that, generally speaking, it is impossible to form ships of two decks that will sail, by the wind, with ships of one deck; or 3-decked ships that will sail with those of two decks; consequently the chance of the enemy's escaping is much augmented by opposing two-deckers to single-decked ships, or three-deckers to those of two decks. And this is a reason why 3-decked and 2-decked ships should, as seldom as possible be mingled together, especially in winter.

In the general idea of protecting our trade and annoying the enemy's cruisers, though the suppositions are confined to frigates and the Channel, yet I entertain the same idea with respect to the enemy's greatest force in line-of-battle ships; and I conceive that blocking up their ports by squadrons constantly kept off them (the ships alternately relieved) is the only effectual method of obliging them either to come to decisive actions, or of preventing them from venturing to sea.

Reflecting upon the means of defence, I was induced to turn up Steel's list for March last, to see what force of frigates was then said to be employed in the English and Irish Channels, where the great strength of the enemy in this way must have been directed. I found this list stated only 21 frigates in both these Channels at that time; and I found that it stated exactly the same number of frigates upon the Mediterranean station alone. I cannot say whether these statements are just or not, but it appeared strange that the numbers should come near each other. I do not mention this as a subject upon which I am qualified to judge, because there may be weighty reasons for sending those frigates abroad; but I am afraid the home trade will suffer, till it is in the power of the admiralty to give it a much more effectual support in frigates, by rendering it difficult for the enemy's ships and their prizes to enter their own ports.

Supposing the mode of defence above suggested to be put in practice, so as to render it improbable that any force of the enemy could pass the Straits of Dover, or escape from Dunkirk, without the knowledge of the commander stationed off that port; then the principal consideration with respect to the North Sea and the eastern coasts of England and Scotland will be—the force necessary in that

sea to keep it clear of privateers, and to prevent any attack from the northward during the summer months. My general idea on this subject is that one 64- or 50-gun ship, with 3 frigates and 3 sloops would be sufficient, provided the large ship and one of the frigates be kept to the northward, in the neighbourhood of Orkney and Shetland, during the months of May, June, July, August, and September, to prevent any force of the enemy from approaching our coasts from the northward; and to prevent descents upon those islands, or upon the northern coasts of Scotland, which, with the northern trade, might otherwise be exposed to the depredations of a very small force of the enemy, if the idea of discontents in Scotland should induce them to venture any ships in those seas. The ships stationed at or near Shetland in the summer months might be directed to stand over to the nearest coasts of Norway occasionally, to gain intelligence of the enemy's cruisers, and to give countenance and protection to the northern trade. The remaining frigates and sloops might also at times be sent to cruise off the Naze of Norway and the Scaw, to prevent privateers from annoying the Baltic trade. The general rendezvous of all these ships would most properly be the Firth of Forth, in the neighbourhood of which they should remain during the three or four worst months of the year.

The western coasts of England and Scotland would also require some frigates for their defence against the enemy's small ships; but one large frigate and three or four sloops may be deemed sufficient whilst an admiral and a squadron are kept upon the southern coast of Ireland, who could detach such ships as might be requisite to reinforce those ships which were to cruise to the northward.

In order to accomplish such a mode of defence as has been suggested, it may very probably be alleged that our force is inadequate, as so many ships must necessarily be employed abroad. A full answer to this might involve a most important discussion upon manning the navy ; but it may, at present, be sufficient to observe that no object abroad appears of half so much consequence as effectually protecting the coasts of Britain and the home trade. This idea seems to have pervaded the councils of this country during the war of 1756 ; for in all that war the blocking up the enemy's ports at home appeared to be the first object ; and till this object is fully accomplished, the apprehensions of the nation, joined to the complaints of the merchants, must give administration considerable uneasiness.

I understand from sea officers employed in the squadrons at home, with whom I have conversed since I have been here, that there are not any private signals given out by the admiralty, by which ships under the orders of different admirals, or of the admiralty, may know each other at a distance. This appears to be of considerable moment, as ships in these situations must be frequently meeting, without a possibility of knowing whether they are to speak to a friend or encounter an enemy ; and fatal mistakes may happen in the night from this cause alone. Dangers of this kind may be certainly avoided, by issuing a set of private signals from the admiralty for the whole navy of Britain, whether employed at home or abroad ; which I believe was done in the war which ended in 1762. Such a set of private signals are easily composed, to last for a year, or for any given time. An example of such a set is given in my schedule ; in which it is also mentioned that, at the beginning of every war, private signals of this kind should be given to

every ship, and to the admirals upon all the stations ; with direction that these most secret private signals should never be used but when the private signals delivered by admirals to their different squadrons were not known to the ships in sight, that they might run the less risk of being discovered by the enemy.

If I shall find that, upon better information or more mature consideration, any of the ideas in this letter ought to be corrected or amended, I will not fail to give you the most early notice ; being with the greatest regard

Titchfield. 27th June, 1794.

Dear Sir,—It gives me great pleasure to find that my ideas of the naval defence of his Majesty's dominions are similar to yours ; and I have been endeavouring to make such an arrangement as the state of the present force will admit. But if the enemy continue to make the exertions which they appear to have been making, from the strength which they have actually shown upon the water about the time of the action of the 1st of June, something more vigorous, and a much more formidable force on our part will be necessary to oppose them in such a manner as to leave less to the power of chance in the defence of this island. The manning the navy more speedily, and lessening the number of invalid discharges, and desertions, are the great, and I think practicable objects ; but these I refer till I have the pleasure of seeing you, and in the meantime confine myself to blocking up the enemy's ports.

This measure may be made more clearly essential by reverting to what was actually done from the year 1757 to the year 1762 ; for although several expeditions were undertaken during that

period, they were subservient to blocking up and opposing the enemy at home, which were the first considerations, and which were truly the foundation of our successes through the whole war, when the fleet were kept off Brest and in Quiberon Bay. It consists with my own knowledge, that the ships were relieved alternately, and were supplied with fresh provisions, corned beef, potatoes, onions, greens, and beer, during the summer; and Sir Edward Hawke and Admiral Boscawen relieved each other.

In the present state of affairs, such a conduct seems even more necessary, and no less practicable. For such a fleet as my statement No. 1 proposes, two sets of flag officers appear to be requisite, to relieve each other by turns. By this mode of defence, the captains, officers, and seamen also relieve each other and are one-fourth part of their time in port, and three-fourths at sea. This is fully as long as it is possible to keep men upon the ocean; because all mankind require a certain relaxation from severe duty, and because it is always in the power of sea officers to obtain that relaxation, by permitting disasters to the ships, masts, and yards—which neither the most severe discipline nor the most extensive and rigorous authority can prevent. Perhaps it may be prudent to keep the three-decked ships in port from November to March; but even in these winter months, smaller squadrons of two-decked ships may be off Brest in easterly winds, and in Torbay when the winds are strong from the westward.

At present, the whole force of the enemy is kept at their ports of Brest and Toulon. They must, therefore, be opposed effectually at home, and in the Mediterranean. According to my ideas, we cannot pretend to keep a great force at any of our settle-

[Continued on page 402.]

STATEMENT I

Of the line-of-battle ships and supposed force of the enemy at their principal ports, with the British force required to oppose them effectually, together with the force which can be opposed to the enemy from the ships now in commission, distinguishing the size of the ship.

Enemy's Ports	Force of the enemy's ships		British force to oppose the enemy effectually		Ships to oppose the enemy from those in commission		Ships in commission kept off the enemy's ports		Ships which may be in port refitting, victualling, &c.		Refitting and victualling ports for the British ships	Stations which may be deemed most eligible for opposing the enemy
	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns		
Brest	4	110	5	100	5	100	3	100	2	100	Plymouth Torbay Portsmouth Cork	From the latitude 48° to the latitude 48° 40', as near the entrance of Brest as the season of the year and the weather will permit
	5	80	8	98	6	98	4	98	2	98		
	27	74	2	80	2	80	1	80	1	80		
	—	—	42	74	39	74	31	74	8	74		
	36	2,838	57	4,552	52	4,134	39	3,064	13	1,068		
Toulon	1	110	4	98	2	98	1	98	1	98	Gibraltar for refitting. The ports of Italy for victualling and watering	As near the entrance of Toulon as possible, taking care that the enemy do not escape towards Gibraltar without being immediately followed
	2	80	14	74	8	74	6	74	2	74		
	8	74	—	—	8	64	6	64	2	64		
	—	—	18	1,428	18	1,300	13	948	5	374		
	11	862	18	1,428	18	1,300	13	948	5	374		

STATEMENT I

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

In estimating the British force which would be necessary to block up and oppose the enemy completely, a greater proportion than that of exceeding them by one third of their force has been chosen, to admit of extraordinary accidents, without risking the defence of Britain and Ireland by sea to any unforeseen disasters which might happen to a few ships. At present the whole force of the enemy is concentrated at Brest in the Atlantic, and at Toulon in the Mediterranean ; therefore it seems absolutely necessary to keep almost our whole force to watch them off those ports ; only sending abroad such force as we are certain they may have sent, in order to re-inforce the commander-in-chief upon the station upon which an attack is intended. For more effectually performing such service when required, a certain proportion of the Channel fleet may always be kept stored and victualled for foreign service.

STATEMENT II

Of the supposed force of the enemy in frigates and smaller vessels at their different ports, with the British force required to oppose them effectually, together with the force which can be opposed to the enemy from the ships now in commission, distinguishing the size of the ships.

Enemy's Ports	Force of the enemy's frigates		British force to oppose the enemy effectually		Ships to oppose the enemy from those in commission		Ships in commission kept off the enemy's ports		Ships which may be in port refitting, victualling, &c.		Refitting and victualling ports for the British ships	Stations which may be deemed most eligible for opposing the enemy
	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns		
Brest . . .	4	36	6	36	4	36	3	36	1	36	Plymouth Torbay Portsmouth Cork	The station of the great fleet off Brest
	6	32	10	32	4	32	3	32	1	32		
	6	18	10	18	6	28	4	28	2	28		
	—	—	—	—	10	18	6	18	4	18		
	<u>16</u>	<u>444</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>710</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>620</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>424</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>196</u>		
Toulon . . .	4	36	6	36	5	36	3	36	2	36	Gibraltar for refitting. The ports in Italy for victualling and watering	Off Toulon or other ports where the enemy may be
	10	32	15	32	10	32	7	32	3	32		
	6	18	10	18	6	28	4	28	2	28		
	—	—	—	—	10	18	8	18	2	18		
	<u>20</u>	<u>572</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>866</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>848</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>588</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>296</u>		
St. Malo . . .	2	40	3	38	3	38	2	38	1	38	Plymouth and Torbay	Off St. Malo, and between it and the Isle of Bas, Jersey and Cancale Bay
	—	—	—	—	3	36	3	36	—	—		
	2	36	4	36	5	32	4	32	1	32		
	4	32	6	32	2	28	1	28	1	28		
	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>18</u>		
	<u>14</u>	<u>388</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>630</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>546</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>412</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>134</u>		
Cherbourg . . .	2	40	4	38	3	38	3	38	1	38	Portsmouth	Off Cherbourg and Havre de Grâce, as near as the weather will permit
	—	—	—	—	3	36	3	36	—	—		
	2	36	3	36	5	32	4	32	1	32		
	4	32	6	32	2	28	2	28	1	28		
	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>18</u>		
	<u>14</u>	<u>388</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>632</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>546</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>412</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>134</u>		
Dunkirk . . .	2	40	4	38	3	38	3	38	1	38	Downs and the Nore	Riding in Gravelin Pits or as near Dunkirk as possible, and cruising between Calais and Dover, having cutters close in
	—	—	—	—	3	36	3	36	—	—		
	2	36	3	36	5	32	4	32	1	32		
	4	32	6	32	2	28	2	28	1	28		
	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>18</u>		
	<u>14</u>	<u>388</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>632</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>546</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>412</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>134</u>		

STATEMENT II¹

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

In stating the supposed force of the enemy in frigates, only such a number as seems necessary to attend their line-of-battle ships are stated to be at Brest, it being reasonable to suppose that the remainder will either be distributed among their ports in the Channel or sent to cruise upon distant stations, especially when we have a fleet constantly off Ushant. The remaining force of the enemy in frigates on this side of Cape Finisterre is therefore stated to be at their ports in the Channel though they may probably be more extensively distributed. In stating the supposed force of the enemy in frigates in the Mediterranean, their whole force is stated as being at Toulon, as they possess no other port in that sea where they can refit. The enemy possess a small force in 50-gun ships which is not here stated, because it cannot be of any consequence when measures have been taken to keep squadrons constantly off their ports. The British force stated to oppose the enemy's frigates is placed as if the whole were to cruise off these ports of France; but it is always to be supposed that our force is to be in proportion to theirs resorting to any particular port; and at any rate it seems necessary that the ports stated to contain frigates should be constantly guarded to prevent the enemy from carrying their prizes to those ports; and the British frigates kept cruising at home, if the enemy's are not abroad. In this Statement the French ports of L'Orient, Rochelle, and Bordeaux are omitted, because it is concluded that the commander-in-chief of the squadron off Brest will be able to detach ships, and otherwise guard those ports so as to make it hazardous for the enemy to enter them. In this statement eighteen guns is to signify sloops of war in general whatever may be their number of guns.

¹ The arithmetic is Patton's.

STATEMENT III

Of the stations on which it seems necessary to keep British ships of war to defend his Majesty's dominions, although no actual force of the enemy be at present in the seas adjacent to them, distinguishing the size of the ships and the most material points of each station.

Stations	Ships of the line		Frigates, &c.		Principal rendezvous	Stations which may be deemed necessary to be guarded	Most material points from whence to discover the first approach of an enemy
	No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns			
(1) North Sea and East Coast of Britain	— — —	— — —	1 1 2 3	50 32 24 18	— Leith Road — —	Shetland and Orkney, Yarmouth Road, River Tyne	Between Yarmouth and the Texel Between Shetland and Orkney Scaw and Naze of Norway
(2) Coast of Ireland and St. George's Channel	1 — —	64 — —	1 2 2	36 24 18	— Cork —	River Shannon Waterford, Dublin Belfast	Cape Clear, Old Head of Kinsale North of Ireland Belfast and Carrickfergus Bay
(3) Newfoundland	1 — —	64 — —	1 1 3	32 28 18	— St. John's —	— — —	— — —
(4) Coast of North America	1 2 —	74 64 —	1 2 3	36 24 18	— Halifax —	Bermudas, Carolina Virginia, Pennsylvania Quebec	Between Bermudas and the Capes of Virginia Off Long Island, New York Mouth of the River St. Lawrence
(5) Jamaica	1 — —	64 — —	2 2 2	44 28 18	— Port Royal Jamaica	— Cape François —	East end of Hispaniola, Cape François, East end of Jamaica, East end of Cuba
(6) Barbados and the Leeward Islands	1 — —	64 — —	1 1 2	44 28 18	— Barbados —	Martinique St. Lucia Guadeloupe	To windward of Barbados To windward of Martinique
(7) East Indies	1 — —	74 — —	1 2 1	50 44 32	— Bombay —	Coast of Coromandel Mouth of the Ganges	All the tracts in which the India ships sail
(8) Coast of Guinea	— —	— —	1 1	50 14	— —	— —	— —

STATEMENT III

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

(1) The ships upon the North Sea station may have the smaller ships to the southward where they run less risk than large ships of danger from the shoals. The larger ships, particularly that of 50-guns, to be between Shetland and Orkney in summer, off the Scaw or Naze in spring and autumn, and at Leith in the depth of winter. The frigates along the coasts of England and Scotland at all seasons ; to call at the Spurn, Yarmouth road, and the Tyne occasionally.

(2) If the line-of-battle ship and one small frigate are upon the south coast of Ireland, the large frigate and one of the sloops may be to the northward, the others ranging St. George's Channel.

(3) No great force is necessary at Newfoundland, as it must belong to the nation which possesses the greatest naval power, and cannot be of use to any other state. The ships of war are required principally to convoy the trade to Spain and Portugal.

(4) These three line-of-battle ships may sail along the coast of America and leave such force as may check the enemy if they venture a force again upon that coast and give countenance to Britain in that quarter.

(5, 6) The ships of 44 guns have been chosen for the West Indies as they have there a greater chance of being able to fight their lower deck guns. This station is also occasionally reinforced by the ships which bring out and carry home the trade.

(7) The same observations as above apply here.

(8) The large ship is intended to bring the trade to the Cape or St. Helena as occasion may require, and return again to India if there be a ship for convoy at St. Helena, or return home with trade if there is not.

STATEMENT IV

Of the Convoys required to ports abroad whether to our own settlements or to foreign ports, specifying the force of the ships which can be spared for this service from those in commission, and the probable time of their absence from Britain.

From whence the trade is to be carried	To what ports the trade is to be carried	Ships of the line		Frigates		Probable time of absence from Britain	Whether the same ships can return with the trade or not
		No. of ships	No. of guns	No. of ships	No. of guns		
London.	East Indies	1	74	1	18	One year	To return with the trade
St. Helena	London	—	—	1	50	6 months	To sail again with India ships
London, &c.	Jamaica	{	—	1	44	8 "	To bring back the trade
		{	—	1	14		
London, &c.	Jamaica	{	—	1	44	8 "	" "
		{	—	1	14		
London, &c.	Jamaica	{	—	1	44	8 "	" "
		{	—	1	14		
London, &c.	Leeward Islands	{	—	1	44	8 "	" "
		{	—	1	14		
London, &c.	Leeward Islands	{	—	1	44	8 "	" "
		{	—	1	14		
London, &c.	Canada	—	—	1	32	6 "	" "
London, &c.	Newfoundland	—	—	1	32	8 "	" "
	{ Spain						{ To Portugal and Spain and returns in time to go out again next year
	{ Portugal						{
	{ Gibraltar	1	64	1	14	2 "	{ To return with the trade
London, &c.	Ditto	1	64	1	14	2 "	" "
London, &c.	Ditto	—	—	—	—	2 "	" The same ships as first mentioned
London, &c.	Coast of Guinea	—	—	1	50	8 "	" To the West Indies and return with trade
London, &c.	North America	{	—	1	50	7 "	{ To return with the collected trade from the Coast of North America
		{	—	1	12		{
						{ To continue in the Mediterranean	
Turkey, Italy, &c.	Gibraltar	—	—	2	50	{ With the ships in the North Sea	To carry the trade from Gibraltar to Turkey, Italy, &c., and so on
London, Hull, Newcastle, Leith	Baltic	{	—	1	44		To go and return with convoys to Flambro' Head, where they part north and south with the sloops
		{	—	2	18		

STATEMENT IV

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS

The ships here stated as convoys employ almost the whole remaining sea force at present in commission, and (supposing the armed ships now taken up to be sufficient for convoying the coasting trade) they may be deemed nearly equal to that duty. But the ships going to and from the several stations may also be reckoned as assistants to the stated convoys, and they will add to their strength as well as to their frequency.

Besides the stationed ships and convoys, some small frigates and sloops will be required to carry despatches and orders, but these may be spared from the ships appointed to watch the motions of the enemy at Dunkirk, where their force does not at present appear to be so great as it has been stated. However, nearly the force mentioned in the statements will probably be very soon wanted in the Channel, as the enemy must find their principal advantage in cruising to intercept the extensive trade of so many nations. Indeed, if the report of an American vessel, said to be arrived at Portsmouth from Havre de Grâce, may be credited, they are making the greatest exertions to send frigates to sea, having built one there in six weeks from the laying the keel to the launching.

Continued from page 393.]

ments abroad whilst this is the case, nor can any distant expeditions be undertaken till our naval force is very much augmented. I have, therefore, proposed that the flag-ships upon the stations abroad should only be of 64 guns, and I even doubt if they should be of so great force, especially in the West Indies, where no strength of the enemy can make any impression before ships could be sent after them from the Channel fleet, especially if a certain number of the ships were always kept victualled and stored for foreign service.

You will receive herewith four statements which comprehend the whole naval force now in commission, with a short abstract of the whole to show the number of ships, as I have taken them from Steel's List for June.

P.S.—I have written upon bad paper, but it is such as I could get here. The statements would have been more accurate if I had taken a little more time, but this appeared a favourable juncture for your seeing them.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE FLEET

[*Rough draft.*]

[June, 1794.]

Western Squadron

From the decided superiority we have lately gained over the enemy's fleet,¹ and supposing things to continue as they now are, I would propose 32 sail of the line and 12 frigates for this service, accompanied by one fire-ship and 6 brigs or cutters, for the purpose of information. Of this force I would propose 24 sail of the line and 8 frigates to cruise as constantly as possible off Brest,

¹ The date of the paper is, therefore, after the 1st June.

and 8 sail more and 4 frigates to refit at Plymouth, and rendezvous in summer, when complete, at Torbay, and be there kept in readiness to relieve those whose turn it may be to come into port. The three-deckers to be confined, as much as circumstances will admit, to long days and summer cruising. With this force, the port of Brest may be generally blocked up, and detachments made after every ship or squadron who may steal out from it or the other ports in the Bay. The squadrons so employed will stand—

3 ships of 100 guns.	6 frigates of 38 and 36,
5 ships of 90 guns.	6 of 28 and 32.
24 ships of 74 guns.	—
—	12
32	

Mediterranean

On a supposition that Corsica is taken, and the Toulon squadron no more than twelve ships.

4 ships of 90 guns.	6 frigates of 36 and 38.
18 ships of 74 guns.	2 of 44
—	2 of 50
22	4 of 32
	2 of 28
	4 sloops
	—
	20

As far as my judgment reaches, this number of ships is sufficient for any service that can arise in the Mediterranean after Corsica is taken, and will admit of convoys being sent down as low as Gibraltar to meet the trade that will be sent out from England, agreeable to the requisition of the committee of merchants. I allow in this arrangement for ships refitting in port or at home. To keep this squadron

in health and fit for every exigency of service, the navy board must be punctual in their supply of stores in proper store ships, and the victualling office in their sending out provisions. The sick-and-hurt, too, must furnish everything necessary to prevent and remove any appearance of scurvy amongst the seamen.

Coast of Africa

One ship of 50 guns and one sloop.

This ship to serve as one of the convoys for the Port,¹ Spanish and Mediterranean trade, and after she has visited the several settlements on the coast of Africa, to proceed to the Leeward Islands, and make one of the ships intended for convoys from these islands or Jamaica, as occasion shall require.

Leeward Islands

As the enemy have no footing in these islands² and can have no privateers there but such as are fitted out in Europe or America, and a very few from St. Thomas's, I see no necessity for leaving a greater force here than what may be sufficient to give countenance to our possessions, and afford sufficient convoys to Europe at the stated times. For these purposes I would propose 1 ship of 74 guns, 2 of 64, 2 frigates of 36 or 38, 2 of 32, 1 of 28 and 3 sloops or brigs. When I come to speak of the convoys for Europe, I shall allow a relief for such ships as come home with the trade, and which are invariably to be the ships in the worst condition.

¹ Presumably Portuguese ; but the name is unusual.

² The French landed in Guadeloupe on 3rd June. This paper must have been drawn up before that news reached the admiralty, and its date is thus fixed, within fairly narrow limits, as the last half of June.

Jamaica and St. Domingo

1 of 74, 3 of 64, 4 frigates from 36 to 38 or 44, 2 of 32, 2 of 28, and 4 sloops.

This number appears to me sufficient for every common service that can arise out of present circumstances.

Coast of America

I cannot see any reason for more than 2 line-of-battle [ships] to be stationed at Halifax, while the ports of Brest and Toulon are guarded by the Western and Mediterranean fleets, and who will naturally detach ships after any that may escape from these ports. I will therefore say—

1 of 74, 1 of 64, 1 of 50, 2 frigates of 36, 2 of 32, 2 of 28 and 2 sloops.

This squadron will naturally cruise on such part of the coast of America as is best adapted, from information received, to give protection to our trade and annoy the enemy.

Bermudas

I would propose 1 frigate of 32 guns and 1 sloop to be continued at this island, who should cruise off the coast of Carolina and Virginia occasionally, agreeable to the intelligence received. The mentioning these islands reminds me of two ingenious young men, lieutenants, who were sent out, in the peace, to survey it; and if I mistake not, their reports do credit to themselves and deserve well of the public.

Newfoundland

2 ships of 64, 2 of 32, 2 of 28 and 2 sloops seems an ample provision for this service; but in order to

make the force effectual, the governor should not be detained beyond the second convoy, as he otherwise only goes out to come home again, and can be of little use to either fishery or colony.

East Indies

As the Mauritius will always prove a source of great depredation on our trade, if not guarded against by a force from home, and it seems necessary to give countenance to the valuable possessions in that country, I should, under present circumstances, propose [to] keep 2 ships of 64 guns, 1 of 50, 2 of 44 fitted with large carronades, 2 of 32, 1 of 28 and 2 sloops.

Coast of Ireland, Cork

1 ship of 64, 1 of 50, 1 of 44, 2 of 36, 2 of 32, 2 sloops, 2 cutters or brigs.

As I take it for granted the French will have no cruising squadrons of large ships to the westward after Brest is blocked up, I think this an ample allowance, not only for opposing the enemy but for granting convoys into the English and Bristol Channels.

Having thus provided amply for the protection of our trade and settlement to the westward of the English Channel, I will now take a view of the trade within it, but before I begin this subject I must observe—

Channel and East Coast

For the purpose of guarding the Channel, I would propose Admiral Macbride's squadron to consist of—

2 cut down line-of-battle ships, 2 of 38, 2 of 36, 2 of 32 and 3 cutters.

The station to be as at present, but not oftener on the English coast than is absolutely necessary for refreshment, &c.

Off Cherbourg and to anchor generally in Havre de Grâce road—

1 ship of 50 guns
2 ships of 44 or 36
2 ships of 32
1 sloop
2 cutters

This station to begin where Admiral Macbride's ends, and to reach as far as Dungeness.

Guernsey—gunboats, as at present

Dunkirk

1 ship of 38
1 ship of 36
4 ships of 32
2 sloops or brigs
4 cutters

Downs

1 flag-ship
1 of 44
4 from 32 to 24
4 sloops
5 cutters

These ships are to be employed in granting convoys to coasters and for occasional services.

Yarmouth Roads and Leith

1 ship of 50
3 frigates of 32
2 frigates of 28
2 sloops
2 cutters

The Nore

Such ships as are coming down both rivers, and 3 stationed cutters, and the ships that come and go with convoys.

Portsmouth

The ships fitting out ; occasional convoys coming and going, and 4 cutters.

Plymouth

Ships fitting out ; occasional convoys, and 6 cutters.

The force, therefore, which, agreeable to this plan, will be necessary for the protection of the trade abroad and [at home] will be as follows :—

Summary.

The summary given in the draft is so irregular, confused, and badly written that nothing satisfactory can be made of it. The following table is compiled from the foregoing details :—

	Rates			Ships of the Line	Guns						Sloops, &c.
	1	2	3		50	44	38	36	32	28	
Western squadron	3	5	24	32	—	—	3	3	3	3	6
Mediterranean .	—	4	18	22	2	2	—	—	4	2	4
Leeward Islands	—	—	3	3	—	1	1	2	2	1	3
Jamaica . . .	—	—	4	4	—	1	2	2	2	2	4
Bermuda . . .	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Halifax . . .	—	—	2	2	1	—	—	2	2	2	2
Newfoundland .	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	2	2	2
Africa	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
East Indies . .	—	—	2	2	1	2	—	—	2	1	2
Ireland	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	—	4
Coast of England	—	—	1	1	2	2	3	4	13	4	25
Cut down . . .	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	—	—	71	8	9	10	15	33	17	54

MIDDLETON TO PITT

Admiralty. 26th September, 1794.

Dear Sir,—I omitted in my list of regiments, the 17th, on its way from Plymouth to Spithead ; but what occasions my troubling you so soon again is, that from one channel of information, we just learn that the French have 25 sail of the line ready at Brest, and which would have sailed but that they had learnt of Lord Howe's being at sea with a superior fleet.

If the French should have any intention of sending their fleet to sea with this easterly wind, and Lord Howe continues at Torbay, our Mediter-

anean and Jamaica convoys are in a very critical situation. Both fleets must at this time be drawing near the Channel, and cannot enter it while the easterly winds hold. The former is said to be the richest that ever came from that part of the world and the latter very considerable.

The only ships of ours now at sea are Admiral Kingsmill's squadron and a frigate one from Falmouth, both of which have information concerning these fleets.

Two convoys of troops, too, are under orders to cross the Bay ; and, notwithstanding their escorts are sufficient against common cruisers, yet they are not equal to their protection against a fleet.

I submit these particulars to your consideration, and remain . . .

MEMORANDUM

Downs, &c.

[*Rough draft.*]

[1795?]

Whereas the present situation of public affairs makes it necessary that you should, in a particular manner, be entrusted with the protection of the trade and the security of the coast as far as Beachy Head westward and Orfordness northward :

We have for that purpose directed the captains of his Majesty's ships and vessels named in the margin¹ to put themselves under your command and follow such orders as you may from time to time give them for his Majesty's service. You are therefore to dispose of them in the best and most judicious manner you are able, so as to best answer the two objects we have in view, and acquaint us from time to time with particulars.

¹ Omitted in the draft.

You are to keep such a number of frigates at an anchor, or cruising off Dunkirk as may most effectually prevent any cruisers of the enemy from going out and in, or securing their prizes in that port. You are to give coasting convoys, as often as the number of vessels collected in the Downs may make it necessary, and to caution them from sailing singly or without convoy. As often as the ships or vessels under your command are in want of refitting, you are to send those cruising to the westward of the South Foreland to Portsmouth, and those to the northward to Sheerness, where orders are given for their being immediately taken in hand ; but as the navy and victualling boards have magazines at Deal and Dover, they are to recruit their provisions and stores at these ports. And as the exigency of the service requires the cruising ships to be as much at sea as the state of the ships and the health of the crews will admit, you will take care to keep them so employed, and direct their captains to send their journals regularly to this board for our inspection.

And whereas the victualling board has received directions to have fresh provisions provided at Dover to answer sudden and occasional demands, you are to make use of that convenience in sending out, by all opportunities, fresh meat and greens to the ships that have been longest at sea ; and to others, as the nature of the supply will admit.

You are to cause the signals used by the western squadron to be provided to the ships under your command, and to add any others as you may find necessary for the service entrusted to your care ; and to keep up a correspondence with commanding officers on the stations adjoining to the Downs, so as to be able to agree upon and communicate by

signals with each other what may be necessary for general security and defence.

You are to acquaint the ships under your command that, in case of meeting at any time with a superior number of ships belonging to the enemy, they may expect to find a line-of-battle ship between Dungeness and St. Helens, or in Havre de Grâce Road—and another from Dunnoze as low down as the Start and Guernsey and Jersey—and a third between that and Ushant.

Fleet. Line-of-battle ships

[*Rough draft.*]

2nd September [1795].

As the enemy are so much reduced in the number of line-of-battle ships fit for service in the ports of the Bay, it will be only necessary to keep as many between Brest and Belleisle as may be sufficient to keep the ships there and at L'Orient from acting against us till the services now in hand are finished. But as it is probable that both Dutch and French will make great efforts in the winter, to provide a fleet against the spring, it appears to me to be necessary to keep our line-of-battle ships in port during that season, and to fit them as fast as possible for early service. When ready for sea, to station them at such ports as circumstances may point out to be most proper for acting from, and flags to attend the squadrons that are first ready, so as to proceed to sea with them at a moment's notice.

If the Russian ships remain for the winter,¹ and which seems necessary under existing circumstances,

¹ The Russian squadron, which was with Duncan in the North Sea through the summer of 1795, wintered in England. Cf. Brenton's *Naval History*, ii. 98: Lord Camperdown's *Admiral Duncan*, 58.

they cannot be better disposed of than at the Nore, Hull, Leith, and the Downs. The line-of-battle ships intended to be returned from the West Indies, to be refitted or paid off [and other ships put in their place], as will best suit for strengthening the fleet at home.

If it should be found necessary to keep any of the line-of-battle ships at sea during the winter, their cruises to be of short duration and reliefs frequent. If the services at Quiberon should require ships to lay in that bay, fresh provisions to be regularly supplied, and a trial made how far the propositions made by Sir John Dalrymple¹ on the subject of beer, water, and baking, can be carried into execution and to what extent, with the various expenses of fuel, etc., attending it.

The object of these hints with regard to line-of-battle ships is, To have a large body of them always ready to meet any attack that may be made by combined powers in the Channel and North Sea, or for securing those which may be abroad in case of detachments being sent from Europe to oppose them.

Frigates and small cruisers

As the enemy have failed in their attempts to destroy our trade by line-of-battle ships and large frigates, and as they have little or no trade of their own, but the use of a very large range of sea coast from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, it is probable they will employ all their sea force as well as privateers in the attack of our trade—a system which must be successful in the outset, unless our merchant ships are prohibited to sail without

¹ Best known as the author of *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*, but also as an ingenious chemist. See *D.N.B.*

convoys, and our cruisers put in order for service and properly arranged before the winter sets in.

To provide against this attack, I would propose calling in the frigates that have been most at sea, when present services will admit of it; and, as soon as they are refitted and victualled, to be collected at the Nore, Downs, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Falmouth, and Cork, and kept in readiness for sea for further orders. This is the best arrangement that can be made, in my opinion, till we see what the enemy point at; and as soon as that is discovered we shall be able to lay a plan for counter-acting them. It must however be observed the number of frigates required for foreign service has been so very great, and has so considerably reduced those which were employed at home in annoying the enemy and protecting our own trade, that it will become absolutely necessary to husband the use of our remaining ones as much as possible, and particularly in the demands for convoys, passages, messengers, &c. &c., by the secretaries of state, who have no idea of the numerous services required from our cruisers for the fleet and trade of the kingdom, and the very great difficulties we are put to in complying with their demands, which are generally made on very short notices.

I propose, therefore, that a plan may be given as early in the year as possible for the movements of the army, as far as they can be foreseen, so as to enable us to look forward and provide in time for their accommodation, without interruption to other services equally important. The business of convoys for the trade is become pretty regular, from our insisting on early notice of the periods proposed and of the number of ships which may probably compose them. But on account of the army, the demands are so numerous and the notices so short,

that it is impossible to comply with them without taking the ships from other services, and frequently leaving the tracts of our trade open to the enemy. In short, it requires the co-operation of every office to make the most of the force employed; and whenever one is deficient the whole must suffer in consequence of it.

These are the general ideas that occurred to me for providing for the winter campaign, and against what may be the views of the enemy in consequence of present circumstances. As these vary, others will naturally suggest themselves and be laid before your lordship¹ for your consideration. If what I have mentioned are approved, I will give my mind to bringing forward the ships with every degree of despatch which their present situation will admit of.

SIR JOHN LAFOREY² TO MIDDLETON

Martinique. 24th July, 1795.

My dear Friend,—Although, I doubt not, a letter by the next packet will reach you sooner than this by the tedious progress of a convoy, yet I think it right to present you also with this, as it is to accompany the reasons I give to their lordships for feeling myself obliged to send Rear-Admiral Thompson³ home.

I will not trouble you with a recapitulation of what I have said in my public letter, but I will enclose a copy of what Mr. Dick⁴ has given

¹ Presumably, therefore, the memorandum was drawn up for his consideration of Earl Spencer, then first lord.

² Commander-in-chief at the Leeward Islands.

³ Charles Thompson, the same as in the previous correspondence (*ante*, pp. 84 *sqq.*), which, curiously enough, Laforey seems to have forgotten.

⁴ Laforey's secretary.

under his hand, and which I have transmitted to Lord Spencer in a letter I have wrote to his lordship upon the subject. But even that is not all ; he has dealt the same language out among the ships of the squadron, and at the yard at Fort Royal. What can have been the occasion of so much malevolence, I cannot conjecture, for I have scarce any acquaintance with the man and never can have offended him ; but I have been given to understand that his treatment of my predecessor¹ was very similar to what I have met with, who sat much quieter under it than I have been disposed to do.

I will write to you a longer letter by the packet.

I am, my dear friend,

Yours most truly and most faithfully,

JOHN LAFOREY.

Enclosure

James Dick to Admiral Laforey

Majestic. 9th July, 1795.

Sir,—Considering it incumbent on me to pay a visit of respect to Rear-Admiral Thompson upon his arrival from his station, I was received by him with his usual civility ; and having no business, I was about to leave him very soon, but he stopped me, and said he concluded that I had seen the correspondence between you and him since your arrival, and particularly the letters written a day or two past and this day. I answered, that my situation made me acquainted with all transactions of your command ; but that for two days past I had been a good deal absent from you on my private affairs. He soon discovered the truth, that I wished to avoid conversation of that sort ; but persisted in

¹ Vice-Admiral Benjamin Caldwell.

it and said that you had begun your command in a very improper manner; that calling your ships together at this season was an unjustifiable measure, about which, and various other acts of yours, people began to talk and abuse you for.

I answered that it had been the fashion to abuse commanders-in-chief, and that I lamented much to hear an officer in his situation giving countenance, either by word or deed, to such unmerited calumny. He replied that it was natural for me to be partial to my friend, but that, for his part, exclusive of the personal dislike he had for you, he most cordially united with all persons that condemned your present measures; that he had done it in writing to yourself very candidly, which he hoped would teach you to take advice in future. This conversation becoming very unpleasant to me, I took my leave.

I am, Sir, your most obedient, humble servant,
JAMES DICK.

Martinique. 12th September, 1795.

My dear Friend,—Your kind favour of the 4th August came this day to my hands; but I have not yet got that which you mention to have wrote a few days antecedent thereto.

I have my attention anxiously pointed at the objects you recommend; but from whence, my dear friend, are the means to be derived? When I sailed from England, the squadron in these seas amounted to 27 sail; it is now reduced to 16. Since that period this station has been deprived of four ships of 74, one of 50, one of 40, two of 32, one of 28, and two of 18 guns; in all eleven. There never was a period when numbers were more necessary than the present. I have not a strength by any means adequate to the protection of commerce and the islands, the watching of the

enemy's ports, the cruising to windward to prevent their supplies, and the complying with the exigencies of the army. I no sooner have refitted a ship to send for some of the former purposes, than the cries for protection and assistance to the several islands distressed or menaced by the enemy assail me. I have nothing but a choice of difficulties. I will do everything in my power with what I have, but it is only within the limits of that power I can act with effect.

How the *Bellona* is lost to me I cannot conceive. If she is not blown by a hurricane to Jamaica, the vice-admiral must have taken her home. I will hope that is not the case, although I believe him capable of it or any act of disobedience the perverseness of his disposition inclines him to. He rode lord paramount over my predecessor, and made the same attempt on me. That ship as well as the *Resource* are serious losses to me at this time; I am reduced now to two active two-decked ships, for the third must always be stationary at the Saints; it is the only preservation of that port. The large ships must cruise to windward, where most probably supplies will not be sent in single ships, and the enemy's frigates in their ports here are too heavy to be blocked up by single ones of mine, and I have not enough to double them. They have now a cut-down ship of 50 guns, carrying 36 pounders, and three others of 40 guns each, besides corvettes carrying 20 guns, and numerous armed brigs, sloops and schooners. Pray, my dear friend, explain these matters for me, that I may receive such reinforcements as will enable me to act up to the expectations that are formed upon me.

I hear nothing now of Molloy,¹ so that I am

¹ His trial for misconduct on 1st June, 1794, ended on 15th June, 1795, in a sentence of dismissal from his ship—the *Cæsar*.

ignorant what steps he is taking ; he has not yet wrote to me, and I am so hurt at the turn his affair has taken, that I know not, until he does, what to write to him. My son is well, as is his father ; I have just sent him to look into the ports of Guadeloupe.

Accept my best wishes to yourself, your family, and our friends, and believe my assurances of being,
My dear friend,

Yours most faithfully,

JOHN LAFOREY.

EARL SPENCER TO MIDDLETON

[*Holograph.*]

Admiralty. Friday, 23rd October, 1795.

Dear Sir Charles,—Being obliged to go out to attend a council to-day, I take the method of communicating to you the determination I have at length, on a very full reconsideration of the whole matter, come to of the necessity of reverting to my former idea of ordering Sir John Laforey to return home.¹ From the conversations I have had on the subject with his Majesty's other confidential servants, I find their opinions lean so strongly that way, and I myself, upon reflection, am so perfectly convinced

¹ The reason of this recall nowhere appears ; it does not seem to have been put into writing. It is difficult not to think that it was, in some way, connected with the sending home of Thompson ; though Thompson's letters, as his language and demeanour, were marked by extreme insolence, and he was informed by the admiralty that he was to be tried by court-martial. Laforey's death, on the homeward voyage, prevented this ; and the vice-admiral's interest was strong enough to get him a command in the fleet under Sir John Jervis, who was less inclined than even Laforey to tolerate his insolence, and sent him home ; but again he was appointed to a command, in which he died. If we only knew something of his family, much might be clear which is now obscure.

that by the expedient we had proposed in the instruction to him, drawn the other day, we should run so much risk of a misunderstanding arising, which would infallibly endanger the public service on an occasion of such infinite importance, that I have no hesitation in saying that, on these grounds, a direct order to him to return is the only step proper to be taken in the present circumstances.

I, therefore, propose that such an order should be sent out with the expedition when it sails, or before it if any light vessel is sent first, directing him to take three of the line-of-battle ships then under his command, and, on the arrival of the fleet &c., from England, return home, giving protection if necessary to any homeward bound trade which may be coming at the time; that he shall send two other line-of-battle ships to St. Domingo to put themselves under the orders of Admiral Parker, who will then I think have a sufficient force to oppose anything which he may have to fear either from French or Spaniards, at present at least; and leave the remaining ship of the line, and all the frigates, &c., under the orders of Admiral Christian.¹ Admiral Christian, on the departure of Sir John Laforey, will remain in the command; but I do not propose that he should have a commander-in-chief's commission, as it is my intention to give the appointment of commander-in-chief in the Leeward Islands to Admiral Cornwallis, after he has performed the service he is now about to sail upon. As the instructions to Christian are come,

¹ Hugh Cloberry Christian. As flag-captain to Rear-Admiral Rowley in the *Suffolk*, and afterwards in command of the *Fortunée* frigate, was in all the actions of the war from 1779 to 1782, in the West Indies and on the coast of America. His sailing from England on this occasion was delayed, by a succession of gales, till the following March, and he did not reach his station till the end of April. He died, while commander-in-chief at the Cape of Good Hope, in November 1798.

and the expedition seems to be drawing towards a point, I think it will be right that the order, as well as all the others necessary for that expedition, should be made out and signed immediately.

Yours very sincerely,
SPENCER.

MIDDLETON TO LORD SPENCER

[*Fair copy. Autograph.*]

23rd October, 1795.

My Lord,—Having very freely and candidly delivered my opinion of Sir John Laforey's professional abilities, and the unprecedented measure of recalling him, I can only lament its being carried into execution. If growing in years be an objection to employing experienced officers in commands of trust, Sir John Laforey will have to complain that he is singled out as the first, while commands of still greater consequence are entrusted to officers more advanced in years; but whatever conduct may be observed towards Sir John Laforey, his having been singled out by Admiral Boscawen to board a 74-gun ship in Louisbourg harbour, and setting fire to her, with boats only, whilst that garrison remained in possession of the enemy, will never be forgot in naval history, however it may sleep in the present day.

Sir John Laforey has served through every station, with great reputation as a man and an officer, and will, I doubt not, maintain that character through life.

I have put your lordship's letter into Mr. Nepean's hands, who will naturally carry the contents into execution; but I feel my own reputation too much concerned, to take any active share in the business; and I would submit to your lordship,

under every circumstance, whether the order for Sir John Laforey's return should not be grounded on a letter from the secretary of state, in preference to one from the admiralty board containing no reason whatever for the recall.

LORD SPENCER TO MIDDLETON

Admiralty.

[*Holograph.*]

Sunday night, 25th October, 1795.

Dear Sir Charles,—The receipt of your letter in answer to mine proposing the minute for the recall of Sir John Laforey has given me real concern, as it is impossible for me to draw any other influence from it, but that of your having determined to withdraw from office.

The idea I entertain of the constitution of this board, and of the manner in which the business of it should be carried on, is, that in every measure determined upon and officially proposed to the board by the first lord, every member of the board is considered as ready to take an active part by his signature ; and though the responsibility unquestionably rests on the first lord, the other members are always understood to concur in his measures. I must therefore desire, in the present instance (one of too much importance to be passed over lightly), that you will declare your concurrence in the recall of Sir John Laforey by signing the order which has been prepared in pursuance of the minute communicated to you by me, and which will be ready for signature to-morrow morning.

Had you rested your disinclination to take an active part in this measure on a private and personal consideration alone, as being unwilling to

have your name appear to an order which you thought might be unpleasant to an intimate friend, the case would have been very different ; but having put it on the ground of public duty and disapproval of the measure, it becomes absolutely necessary for me, in the situation in which I stand, to bring the matter to a distinct point.

I am, dear Sir,
Your very obedient, humble servant,
SPENCER.

MIDDLETON TO SPENCER

[*Fair copy. Autograph.*]

Admiralty. 26th October.

My Lord,—No consideration on earth will induce me to concur in what I think an unjust measure, because I know myself to be amenable to a much higher tribunal than any on earth. As your lordship seems to insinuate resignation of office, my seat is at your lordship's service whenever you choose to recommend another member to his Majesty to fill it.

Hertford Street. 26th October, 1795.

[*Fair copy. Autograph.*]

My Lord,—The tenor of your lordship's letter on Saturday¹ having compelled me to a resignation of my seat at the admiralty board, I take it for granted you will be pleased to signify the same to his Majesty on Wednesday.

Under these circumstances, I trust your lordship will dispense with my further attendance at the office.

¹ This seems to refer to the letter dated 25th, Sunday night.

SPENCER TO MIDDLETON

[*Holograph.*]

Admiralty. 26th October, 1795.

Dear Sir Charles,—I shall not fail to lay before his Majesty on Wednesday next the correspondence that has lately passed between us, and shall take his Majesty's pleasure on the subject of it.

I could have wished that till a new commission can be issued, it had been convenient for you to attend the ordinary business of the board ; but if you feel any objection to it, I do not wish to press it. There are several memorandums in your possession relating to the current service, which I suppose you can have no difficulty in communicating to me, as the want of them may occasion some interruption in the regular course of business.

I am, dear Sir,

Your very obedient, humble servant,

SPENCER.

MIDDLETON TO SPENCER

Hertford Street. 27th October, 1795.

[*Fair copy. Autograph.*]

My Lord,—As soon as I see Admiral Gambier, I shall possess him of all the memorandums I have on the subject of business.

If I could have thought my remaining at the board a short time in any degree useful, I should certainly have done so ; but your lordship's letter spoke a language too plain to be misunderstood, even by me, who should have been the most indisposed to misunderstand it. Considering my time of life, and, I hope I may be allowed to say without vanity, my laborious and faithful services, I could

not but think that my signature would not have been so peremptorily required, since it was not necessary in point of form, if it had not been meant to convey to me that I took too much upon myself, and that my general behaviour in my situation was not such as ought to be patiently submitted to.

I certainly never could, nor would, consider myself at the board of admiralty as much absolutely ministerial, in things to which I was required to sign my name, as a young man, who might more reasonably be expected to defer to greater experience and authority. On the whole, my seat is much at your lordship's service, and I shall certainly quit it with more pleasure than I came into it; at the same time, my personal feelings would never have forced me to the step I have taken, if your lordship's language had not rendered it indispensable.

I am glad your lordship does not press my continuance till a new patent is made out, as I am anxious to get a little country air and exercise before the winter sets in.

MIDDLETON TO HENRY DUNDAS¹

[*Fair copy. Secretary's writing.*] 9th November, 1795

Dear Sir,—When Lord Spencer came first into office, I represented to Mr. Pitt, to yourself, and his lordship, the impropriety of allowing sea-officers to hold seats at the admiralty board, whilst their flags were flying, and this I understand was acquiesced in. I felt the inconveniences of such an arrangement in Lord Chatham's time, but much

¹ At this time secretary for war and president of the board of control. Afterwards, as Lord Melville, first lord of the admiralty.

more since Lord Spencer has presided at the board. On my former experience, therefore, and because I thought it dishonourable to receive a salary without the due performance of the duty, I prevented Admiral Gambier¹ from retaining the command of the *Prince George* after his appointment to the admiralty, not expecting, by any means after such an explanation and conduct, that an officer in service would have been immediately introduced² to the board. I concluded, however, that this officer being only a captain, and as such generally employed afloat, no material ill consequences might ensue, and therefore, that I might not derange or perplex any public measures, I refrained from any direct objections to the appointment.

It has, I am sorry to say, proved unfortunate for the public service that I acquiesced, because the proposals, which were continually brought forward—evidently for the purpose of procuring popularity in the fleet at the national expense, and too hastily adopted by the first lord, without either a consideration of the subject or a confidential communication with me, who was necessarily to have the arrangement of it—placed me in a situation equally awkward and invidious. If my long experience in office, and the habits I had acquired of managing the affairs of masters and surgeons, had been regarded, the public would not now have been saddled with the lasting expense of more than £15,000 per annum, which has now been established.

Being, from habit and inclination, an enemy to all unnecessary increase of the public expenses, I found myself frequently in an opinion opposite to

¹ James Gambier the younger, afterwards Lord Gambier.

² Lord Hugh Seymour.

that of Lord Spencer and his more confidential friends, as well as open to constant attacks from other quarters, which, because from subordinate people, were chiefly anonymous; a specimen of which I beg to enclose,¹ as an instance of the malignity with which I was treated.

The measure of giving a general half-pay and other emoluments to surgeons and masters, without the chance of receiving any real benefit from it during the present war, I most heartily disapproved, from the fullest conviction that, were it even necessary at any time, it ought at least to be postponed till the naval instructions and general pay of the navy, then under revision, had been duly examined and arranged. I knew from experience, too, that an assurance of considering this matter at a proper season would have given the requisite satisfaction, and that one third of the money would have been eventually saved. But I was told, and I think with no great delicacy, that I opposed the measure because it had not originated with myself—an observation, omitting all personal considerations, not the very best that could be made on a subject of public economy, by the president of a board, under which charges to an immense amount are daily and necessarily incurred. And here, my love of truth and my country obliges me to say, that, in the long course of business in which I have been concerned, I have never seen so little attention paid to economical management, as in the present moment. His lordship's rebuke, therefore, very ill applied to me in resisting only the origin of expense in others; for I do not remember an instance, in which I have been an advocate for profusion, but a thousand instances to the contrary. This, however, laid the ground of the first difference

¹ The enclosure was not copied.

of opinion between us. But it was easy for me to perceive that this expensive measure would, right or wrong, be carried into execution ; and therefore I applied myself to modify it in favour of the public as far as I was able, not a little to the disappointment of the mover upon his return to the board.

The next difference of opinion was by¹ a proposition from the same quarter for saddling the public with an additional expense in favour of flag-officers, by appointing twelve supernumerary servants to admirals, seven to vice-admirals, and five to rear-admirals, under the pretence of buying off an abuse, which, if practised, would subject the party to an immediate dismissal from the service. To this proposition I at first consented, from a persuasion that the servants already allowed were to be reduced to 12, 7, and 5, and the wages of those not actually on board to be paid for in money. This would, indeed, have produced a considerable saving in the article of provisions ; but when I found that an admiral was to be paid wages for his 50 servants, and to be allowed to bear 12 more as supernumeraries for wages and victuals, I thought myself obliged to withdraw my assent, not only because it was in itself a great increase of public expense, but because the king's order in council ought to be procured before the measure could properly be allowed. It is not improbable, that a memorial will be offered on this subject, which, like the order for the recall of Sir John Laforey, will not attempt to give any proper reason for its adoption ; for the answer to my objection was, that Lord H[ugh] S[eymour] had pledged himself to the admirals, and that they all liked it wonderfully. That they should approve of the measure, was natural enough, because it might put from £150 to £300 per annum into

¹ *Sc.* was caused by.

their pockets ; but that a junior lord should venture to make such a promise, or suppose that the first lord, to say nothing of the rest of the board, would be bound by such a promise, is, to me, I own, a matter of surprise. It is, however, a truth, that I, to whom Lord Spencer had talked much of confidence, upon his first coming to the board, have found but very little more of it than what was absolutely necessary to the common execution of the business ; while (what I must be permitted to call) an interior cabinet of admiralty talked over and settled their own plans before it reached the board ; and excepting the short space of half an hour and sometimes less, I have rarely had the honour of a conference with the first lord from one week to another. The business to be done came generally to me in the shape of letters or notes, without any other explanations, as though I had been the mere secretary of the office, instead of that confidential communication which might have been supposed to exist between a first lord new to the duty, and an old professional member of the board, long acquainted with the whole routine of the service, and whose zeal for its welfare could not candidly be doubted for a moment. If any measure was essentially good there could be no difficulty in expecting my consideration and concurrence ; if it was otherwise, was my opinion and experience of no moment, not only to the public welfare, but even to the credit and advantage of the board ?

From these instances of public conduct, with which I trouble you, and from my consequent situation, you will, I flatter myself, easily allow that I could be no longer of any material consequence at the board ; and if I further represent that I continually met with circumstances which by no means accorded with my ideas of regularity and

prudent expenditure of the national treasure, your and Mr. Pitt's candour will naturally admit how all this must have been aggravated by the very extraordinary letter I received, and which could have no meaning but to dispense with my further services, as an unwelcome or obtrusive person, at the board.

Disagreeable, however, as I found my situation to be on many accounts, I had determined, before I received this dictatorial mandate, to hold out to the end of the war, from a wish that, though I could not render all the service to my country I desired, I might, notwithstanding, in some important cases be of use. But the doctrine asserted in the correspondence alluded to, it was impossible for me, as an admiral, high in rank, and not ill-informed perhaps in my professional duties, to receive with implicit assent. I did not, till then, understand, that I was to dwindle into the wretched insignificance of sitting as a numerical member of a naval board, to receive a salary for signing my name to whatever might be put before me ; to concur in all measures, without question or hesitation, whether dictated by ignorance or pride, and to undergo the humiliation of obsequious attentions, without difficulty or delay. I was not prepared for all this, and therefore was compelled to seek a refuge in retirement.

If the king, indeed, in the point before us, had signified his pleasure through the secretary of state, my duty would have led me to an instant compliance, whatever pain I might have felt on the hard measure (as I might conceive it) shown to an intimate friend and unexceptionable officer ; but this, though the proper channel for so strong a measure, did not suit the purpose. That purpose, I saw and felt ; and immediately conceived it to be my duty, as an officer, and a man of honour and conscience,

to withdraw myself; and in so doing, I not only enjoy the entire approbation of my nearest friends, but, I flatter myself, the candid approval both of you and Mr. Pitt, whether concealed or expressed; and I cannot take my leave, both of you and public business, without assuring you that, upon any crisis which may seem to demand my services as an officer, in any respect, I shall think it my duty cheerfully to stand forth and sacrifice my ease and other personal considerations to the honour and advantage of my country.

INDEX

*Names marked * are in the Dictionary of National Biography.*

ACTON

- *ACTON, Sir John, general minister at Naples, 174
- Admiralty, lords of, letter from, 14, 15
- *Affleck, Edmund, commodore, 130
- Agar, W. E., commissioner of customs, 310
- *Amherst, Lord, 43
- Antigua, hospital needed at, 111-13
- *Arbuthnot, Marriott, vice-admiral, 141, 143-4
- Armament, Dutch, pp. xii *sq.*, 260-80 ; Russian, p. xviii, 380 ; Spanish, p. xix, 351-3

- BAKER, Mr. alderman, of Rochester, 329
- Balfour, George, captain, 138 *n.*
- *Bankes, Henry, M.P., 145
- *Baring, Francis, chairman of the commission of enquiry, 218, 235, 250. Letter to, 232 ; letter from, 287
- *Barrington, Hon. Samuel, admiral, 254, 292
- *Bayne, William, captain, 113
- Bear, Laurence, ship's cook, 257
- *Bedford, Duke of, 328
- *Berry, Sir John, comptroller of victualling, 181
- *Blane, Dr., afterwards Sir, Gilbert, 328
- Boone, Thomas, commissioner of customs, 310

CHAROULIÈRE

- *Boscawen, the Hon. Edward, admiral, 82, 138, 369, 386, 393, 420
- Bouillé, Marquis de, French general, 59
- Bouverie, Mrs., 123, 132
- *Bowen, James, master, 155, 305, 307, 309, 311. Letter from, 307
- Bryne, Henry, captain, lost at sea, 106
- *Burke, Edmund, paymaster of the forces, 56
- Butten, Mrs., 333
- Byron, George Anson, captain, 307
- *CALDWELL, Benjamin, captain, afterwards admiral, 415. Letter from, 326
- *Call, Sir John, 382 and *n.*
- Campbell, William, commissioner, 159
- Camperdown, Lord, 411
- *Carkett, Robert, captain, lost at sea, 130
- *Carysfort, Earl of, 140
- *Cavendish, Lord John, 177, 347
- Chamberlayne, captain, 137
- *Chatham, Earl of, first lord of the admiralty, 144, 311-12, 315, 317, 319, 321, 323, 329, 345-6, 352-3, 369, 382-5, 387, 424. Letters from, 319, letters to, 353, 350
- Charoulière, Buor de la, capitaine de vaisseau, 326

CHERBOURG

- Cherbourg, works at, 255-7, 288, 292
 Cherry, George, commissioner of victualling, 55, 153, 266
 Chips, abuse of privilege, 157-8
 *Christian, Hugh Cloberry, admiral, 419
 Chucks, Mr., anticipation of, 72
 *Clarence, Duke of, 376, 379
 Cleghorn, Mr., 384-5
 Cleversal, John, master-joiner, 13, 14, 24
 Clue, de la, French admiral, 369
 *Cornwallis, the Hon. William, captain, afterwards admiral, 331, 419
 Court-martial, question for, 137
 *Curtis, Sir Roger, 278

- DACRES, MR., chief clerk, 247
 *Dalrymple, Sir John, author, 412
 D'Amblimont, Comte, chef d'escadre, author, 326
 *Darby, George, admiral, lord of the admiralty, 15, 42
 Dick, James, secretary, 414. Letter from, 415
 Dick, John, commissioner of enquiry, 250
 *Digby, Robert, rear-admiral, disappointed of assistance from West Indies, 152, 369, 384
 Dockyards, irregularities in, 185, 133-37, 333-5; organisation of, 193; visitation of, 194-7; report on, shelved, 338-45
 *Dorchester, Lord, 274
 *Drake, F. S., admiral, 128, 133
 Drummond, John Auriol, commander, lost at sea, 105
 *Duncan, Adam, Lord, 411
 *Dundas, Henry, afterwards Lord Melville, secretary for war, 424

EDWARDS, Gerard Noel, Middleton's son-in-law, marriage of, 114, 119

GRAVES

- Edwards, Mrs., 123. *See* Middleton, Diana
 *Egmont, Lord, first lord of the admiralty, 227
 Eldridge, Daniel, master-joiner, 13
 *Elliott, Sir John, physician, 151
 Enquiry, commission of, 232, 319. Letter from, 250
 Estimates, naval, 215

- FANSHAWE, Robert, commissioner. Letter from, 333, 335
 Fees, question of, 153-4, 177-8
 Finch, The Hon. Seymour, captain, 108
 *Fitzwilliam, Lord, 317, 319
 Flag, question of promotion to a, 138-146, 258-9
 Fleet, manning the, 206, 280-6; disposition of, Patton, 386-408; Middleton, 408-14
 Folcher, Henry, collector of customs, 310. Letter from, 310

- *GAMBIER, James (1), vice-admiral, 117, 142-3; his public and domestic anxieties, 151
 *Gambier, James (2), Lord [admiral of the fleet], 132, 423, 425
 *Gascoyne, Bamber, lord of the admiralty, 15
 George, Jacob, a seaman, 309-10
 *Germain, George, Lord, secretary of state for war, 9, 296. Letter to, 44-5. *See* Sackville, Lord
 Gibraltar, relief of, 55-8
 *Gower, Hon. J. Leveson, captain, afterwards rear-admiral, 211, 372, 377-8. Letter from, 288
 Grasse, Comte de, chef d'escadre; afterwards lieutenant-général and commander in chief in the West Indies, 73, 131-2
 *Graves, Thomas [afterwards Lord], vice-admiral. Letter from, 260

GREENHILL

Greenhill, Henry, storekeeper, accountant, 181
Greenway, John, storekeeper, Letter from, 32
Grenier, Vicomte de, chef de division, author, 326-7
Greville, C. F., lord of the admiralty, 15
Groselier, master shipwright, incites the men to riot, 148
Guichen, Comte de, French admiral, 76

- *HADDOCK, Sir Richard, comptroller, 181
- *Hamond, Sir Andrew, commissioner at Halifax, 130; appointment at Chatham, 142; 143-4
- Harding, Mr., 370
- *Hardy, Sir Charles, admiral, 369, 384
- *Hawke, Edward, Lord, 227, 386, 393
- *Hawker, James, captain, 257
- Hemp, supplied to enemy by neutrals, 220
- Hicks, Mr., appointed to Haslar, 19
- *Hood, Sir Samuel, afterwards Lord, 72, 127-8, 131, 142-4, 275, 288; observations on signals, 372-3, 377, 382
- *Hotham, William, commodore [afterwards Lord], 101, 104-7, 130
- Houlton, captain, 96
- *Howe, Lord, pp. x-xii, 53, 55, 73, 80, 83, 133, 135, 138-44, 143-7, 145-7, 183-4, 211, 254, 258-9, 261-2, 273, 316, 370, 375, 377-81, 383, 385, 408. Letters from, 139, 143, 146, 150, 172, 179, 182, 190-2; letters to, 179, 189, 191, 192, 193, 270
- *Hughes, [Sir] Richard, captain, afterwards admiral, 82, 84, 142-4
- Hunt, Edward, surveyor of the navy, 159, 179. Letters to, 32

II.

LAFOREY

Hunt, Joseph, 132
Hunt, young Mr., 117
IMPRESS SERVICE, reforms in, 113-14, 304-5, 312-14
Inchiquin, Lord [Marquis of Thomond], Letter to, 276; letter from, 276
Incompetence in public offices, p. ix, 44-58
Innis, Mr., builder, 118

- *JAMES, Bartholomew, rear-admiral, journal of, 327
- Johnstone, James, commander lost at sea, 106
- *KEITH, Lord, admiral, 369
- *Kempenfelt, Richard, admiral, 19, 20, 36, 75-6, 370
- *Keppel, Lord, first lord of the admiralty, 43; memoranda to, 47; 53-4, 56, 84 n., 150, 347, 382. Letters to, 151; letters from, 155
- King, the (George III.), memorials to, 34, 168, 208, 324; his illness, 315, 321; (William III.), 241, 324
- *Kingsmill, [Sir] Robert R., rear-admiral, 409
- *Knowles, Sir Charles, 257

LA BRETONNIÈRE, capitaine de vaisseau, 256

- *Laforey, Francis, 104 n.
- *Laforey, Sir John, his early distinction, 82, 420; commission at Antigua, 82; irregularity of his commission, 83; his right to command denied, 84-92, 116; is ordered to wear a broad pennant, 95; refuses it, 97; complains of his accommodation, 101; thinks the manners of the service altered for the worse, 102; hospital is urgently wanted, 107-8; 111-13; admiralty shirk the

F F

LAFOREY

- question of his command, 175 ; he is much hurt, 119 ; refuses to take on charge the St. Eustatius plunder, 120-2, 124 ; despite Rodney's order, 123-26 ; difficulties of his position, 127-30 ; he returns to England, 133 ; is commissioner at Plymouth, 133 ; Molloy does not benefit by Sir T. Pye's death, 136 ; raises the question of his right to a flag, 138-47 ; but does not get it for two years, 148 ; is made a baronet, 148 ; commands in the West Indies, 148 ; and again, 148, 414 ; his dispute with the rear-admiral, 414-5 ; is recalled, 418-21, 427 ; his death, 148, 418. Letters from, 82-148, 414-18
- Laforey, Mrs., 103, 118-9, 126, 132
- Le Cras, Edward, commissioner, 159-60, 180, 230, 237-8
- *Lindsay, Sir John, commodore. Letter from, 173
- *MACBRIDE, John, captain, afterwards admiral, 147, 292, 309, 407. Letter from, 255
- Mackintosh, Lieutenant, 257
- McLean, Mr., clerk, 173
- Marquand, Mr., agent, 246-7
- Marsh, George, clerk, 159
- Marston, Mr., 114
- Martin, Henry, commissioner, 113, 135-6, 138, 141, 380. Letters from, 345
- Masts, supplied to the enemy by neutrals, 220
- Mediterranean squadron, 175
- *Medley, Admiral, 83
- Medway, defence of, 51-2
- *Middleton, Sir Charles, complains of admiralty neglect, 5 ; want of system, 7 ; abuse of patronage, 11, 21 ; contempt of Navy board's reports, 14, 23-9 ; jobbery, 16-18 ; his pro-

MIDDLETON

- posals for 1782, 37-41, 52-4, 57-67 ; mem. for transport, 47-50 ; 151-3 ; for defence of the Medway, 51-2 ; 151-3 ; idea of a peace, 67-71 ; criticism of 1782, 72-81 ; proposes abolition of perquisites in the forests, 149 ; prevention of smuggling, 155-6, 305-7 ; evil of chips, 157-8 ; duty of captains, 161-5 ; condemns guard-ships, 165-6 ; proposes reforms in the navy office, 176-182, 189, 224-231, 235-249 ; a second surveyor is useless, 178-9, 183-4 ; recommends Mr. Ramsay, 250-1 ; urges his right to a flag, 258-9 ; his scheme for early transport, 1787, 266-70, 273-5 ; negotiates the purchase of Haulbowline, 276-7 ; advises being always prepared, 289-305 ; proposes reforms in the impress service, 113-14 ; congratulates Lord Sandwich on his joining the Regency Ministry, 315-19 ; is dissatisfied at the delay of the reports, 320-2 ; 337-45 ; has a prospect of going to the admiralty, 323 ; finds his position in Parliament irksome, 328-31 ; resigns the comptrollership, 345, 347-50 ; acts as unofficial adviser, 353-6, 360-8 ; proposes queries to be sent to Toulon, 357-60 ; discusses Lord Hood's signals, 372-3 ; and others, 374 ; is lord of the admiralty, 386 ; arranges the fleet, 402-8, 411-14 ; has a difference of opinion with Lord Spencer, 418-22 ; and resigns, 422-30. Mentioned, and letters to or from, *passim*
- Middleton, Diana, 104 ; marriage of, 114. See Edwards
- Middleton, Mrs., afterwards Lady, 104, 123, 328, 372, 380 ; her death, p. xix

MILBANKE

- *Milbanke, Mark, admiral, 66, 292
 Mitchell, P., major, 250. Letter from, 251
 Molleson, William, commissioner of enquiry, 250
 Molloy, A. J. P., captain, 134-5, 143-5, 417
 Morse, John, p. ix, 14, 24
 *Mostyn, Savage, 258
 Mount, Mr., printer, 288, 372
 *Moutray, John, captain, 83, 100
 *Mulgrave, Lord, lord of the admiralty, 15, 41-2
 Munton, Mr., 101

NAVY Board, reports of, 15, 23; explanation of warrants, 224; duties of, 235-49, letter to, 14; letters from, 11, 13, 157, 166, 185

Navy, duties of captains, 161; in France, 327; state of, 360-65

Navy, office, needs of, 161; condition of, 225-31; *id.*, 300-4

*Nelson, Horatio, Lord, 84

*Nepean, Evan, 420

Neutrals, render service to the enemy, 220; should be prevented, 222-3

Newton, J., comptroller of customs, 310

*Norris, Sir John, 374

*North, Lord, 8, 76, 237

*ORDE, [Sir] John, captain, afterwards admiral, 135

*Orde, Thomas [afterwards Lord Bolton], 55

PAGE, Mr., printer, 288, 372

Paget, William, secretary, 88, 96, 100, 121

Palby, Mr., contractor, 247

*Palliser, Sir Hugh, vice-admiral, 258, 323

PRINGLE

*Parker, Sir Hyde (1), 36, 57. Letter from, 86

*Parker, Sir Hyde (2), 147

*Parker, [Sir] William, rear-admiral, 147 *n.*, 419

Parry, Francis, captain, 261, 277

Patronage, abuse of, 11-14; *id.*, 21-22;

*Patton, Charles, 380, 382

Patton, Mrs., 372, 380

Patton, Philip (1), collector of customs, 376

*Patton, Philip (2), captain, biographical notice, 368; scheme of signals, 369-85; disposition of fleet, 386-408. Letters from, 368-72, 375-93; letters to, 374

Peace, suggestions for, 67-71; permanent establishment, 216

Pelham, H., commissioner of customs, 310

Pennal, Mr., master, 370

Penton, H., lord of the admiralty, 15

Pierson, Mr., 192

Pitt, Hon. James, commander, 111

Pitt, Morton, 329, 332

*Pitt, William, 55, 134, 143-45, 149, 178, 197; 213, 222, 224, 233, 269, 272, 279, 288, 291, 308, 315, 317-18, 332, 408, 424, 429-30. Letters to, 194, 197, 213, 216, 218, 220-1, 223, 250, 258, 260, 265-6, 273, 275, 277, 305, 311, 320, 328, 330, 337, 346, 351; letters from, 190, 264, 332

*Pocock, Nicholas, marine painter, 356

*Pole, [Sir] C. Morice, captain, 379

Pollard, Mr., 142

*Portland, Duke of, 177, 315, 317

Pownall, J., commissioner of customs, 310

Pringle, J. Eliot, rear-admiral, p. vii

PROBY

- Proby, Charles, commissioner,
140
Pulteney, William, 384 *n.*, 385
*Pye, Sir Thomas, death of, 134

QUERIES, and their answers,
198 ; to be sent to Toulon,
357

- *RAMSAY, Rev. James, 56 ; his
services, 250-4 ; 269, 280,
283, 285, 288, 297, 370
Record, Mr., shipwright, 173
Reynal, Abbé, 63
*Richmond, Duke of, 273, 275,
327
*Rodney, Sir George Brydges,
37, 47, 72, 83, 98-9, 100-1,
103, 106, 107-8, 110, 114,
117-18, 122, 127-8, 254,
369. Letters to, 91, 96 ;
letters from, 87, 123, 124
Rogers, George, 159
*Rose, George, secretary of the
treasury, 194, 279, 329-31
Rowe, Captain, 137
*Rowley, Joshua, rear-admiral,
419
*Rowley, Sir William, 83
*Rutland, Duke of, 134 ; death of,
143
*SACKVILLE, Lord, 250-3, 269
St. Eustatius, plunder of, 120-2,
124
*St. Vincent, Lord, 84, 292, 369
*Sandwich, Lord, pp. viii, ix, xii,
10, 13, 15, 30, 34, 37, 43, 53, 71,
99, 115, 141, 191, 237. Letters
to, 2, 7, 8, 12, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24,
28, 36, 315, 316 ; letters from,
1, 15, 19, 22, 27, 41, 42
Santo, Philip de, a cook's
warrant wanted for, 139
*Saunders, Sir Charles, 258
*Savile, Sir George, on
smuggling, 155-6
*Seymour, Lord Hugh, 425, 427

SHIPS

- *Shelburne, Lord, 53, 56, 58, 67,
176, 240, 247, 347. Letters to,
66, 71
Ships, lost in a hurricane, 105-9 ;
guardships, 165
Ships :—
Achilles, storeship, 133
Actæon, 278
Adventure, 51
Ajax, 53, 105
Alarm, frigate, 3
Albemarle, 49, 105, 107
Alcmène, 106, 115, 118
Alexander, 327
Alfred, 113
Amazon, 105, 108-9
Andromeda, 106, 109
Audacious, 147
Barfleur, 132
Beaver, 105, 108
Belleisle, 54
Belle Poule, 369
Bellona, 417
Bienfaisant, Fr., capture of,
82, 138
Blanche, 106-7
Boreas, 84, 88-91, 110
Brillant, Fr., 256
Britannia, storeship, 107
Brune, 106-7, 109
Cæsar, 417
Camel, storeship, 380
Cameleon, 105-7
Camilla, 52
Carnatic, 155
Cato, 57
Chichester, 137, 273, 275,
278
Clinton, 51
Comet, packet, 115
Commerce of Marseilles, Fr.,
327
Conqueror, 138
Conquistador, 51
Convert, 106
Courageux, 144
Cumberland, 115, 147, 307
Dædalus, 49
Deal Castle, 105-7
Delaware, 51
Discovery, transport, 370

SHIPS

Ships—*continued*

Dover, 273, 278
 Drake, 106
 Druid, 308
 Duke, 374
 Duke William, 132
 Egmont, 105-7
 Endymion, 106-7, 278
 Europa, 151
 Experiment, 105
 Fame, 103, 107
 Formidable, 380
 Fortunée, 419
 Galatea, 51
 Gorgon, 273, 278
 Greenwich, E. Indiaman, 51
 Greyhound, 96
 Hawk, cutter, 309
 Hébé, Fr., captured, 75, 81 ;
 135
 Hero, 147
 Hind, 51
 Hornet, sloop, 109, 114
 Hound, sloop, 57
 Hyæna, 51
 Impregnable, 147
 Intrepid, 53, 57
 Iris, 257
 Irresistible, 155
 Juno, Fr., wrecked, 105
 Laurel, 106, 108
 Montagu, 93, 96, 105
 Myrmidon, 137
 Namur, 369
 Niger, 52
 Orion, 147
 Prince Edward, formerly the
 Dutch Mars, 51
 Prince George, 369, 375, 384,
 425
 Princess Royal, 87
 Prudent, Fr., burnt, 82
 Queen, 237
 Queen Charlotte, 305
 Rainbow, 75, 81
 Ramillies, 100
 Resource, 417
 Révolutionnaire, Fr., 147
 Ripon, 54
 Robinson, storeship, 93, 96,
 100, 107

STEPHENS

Ships—*continued*

Robust, 53
 Rose, 135
 Rover, capture of, 106
 Russell, 57, 126
 Sandwich, 53, 57, 88, 93, 96,
 98, 112, 123-4
 Sapphire, 51
 Scourge, 118
 Sheerness, 278
 Snipe, 155
 Star, sloop, 95
 Stirling Castle, 130
 Spartiate, 104
 Suffolk, 103, 113, 419
 Surprise, 106
 Thames, 51
 Thetis, 174
 Thynne, packet, 104, 109,
 126-7
 Triton, 133
 Triton, Fr., 256
 Trusty, 173-6
 Vengeance, 105
 Venus, 52, 106
 Victory, 17, 20, 327
 Vigilant, 103
 Virginia, 52
 Wasp, lugger, 307-10
 Whitby, storeship, 133
 Winchester, 137
 *Shirley, Sir Thomas, colonel, 59
 *Shovell, Sir Clowdisley, comp-
 troller of the victualling, 181
 Signals, Patton on, 369-85 ;
 Lord Hood's, 372-3
 Skaith, James Mcl., secretary, 87
 Smart, John, joiner, p. ix, 24
 *Smeaton, John, his opinion on
 Plymouth breakwater, 257
 Smuggling, prevention of,
 155-6, 306-9
 *Spencer, Lord, 315, 414-15,
 418, 424-26, 428. Letters to,
 420, 422, 423 ; letters from,
 421, 423
 *Stafford, Marquis of, 141
 Steel's Navy List, 402
 *Stephens, Philip, secretary of
 the admiralty, 3, 119. Letters
 to, 11, 13, 157, 159

STEWART

- Stewart, K., admiral, 380 *n.*
 *Stormont, Lord [Earl of Mansfield], 315
 *Suckling, Maurice, comptroller of the navy, 209
 Suffren, Le Bailli de, p. xviii
- TEER, George, captain, 56, 153, 249, 261
 Templar, Mr., contractor, 247
 Temple, Sir Richard, 328
 Thomas, Joshua, assistant clerk of the Acts, afterwards Middleton's secretary, 209, 235, 249; his death, 322, 325
 Thompson, Mr., surgeon, his appointment to Haslar, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 28
 *Thompson, Charles, captain, refuses to acknowledge authority of a commissioner, 83 *n.*; mentioned, 84, 88, 91-3, 100, 115, 118; rear-admiral, sent home from W. Indies, 414-15. Letters from, 89, 90
 Thomson, Sir John Deas, Barham's secretary, 154
 Timber, returns of, 32-4
 Toulon, queries to be sent to, 357-60
 Transport, method of, 45-7; memoranda on, 47-50, 151-3; scheme for, 266-70, 273-5
 *Trollope, Henry, captain, captures French frigate, 75 *n.*
 Tucker, John, agent at Barbados, complaints against, 114, 117
- UPPLEBY, Samuel, captain, lost at sea, 106

ZOUTMAN

- VAUDREUIL, Comte de, French captain, 37, 44
- *WAGER, Sir Charles, 323
 Wales, Prince of, list of his ministry, 315
 Walker, Mr., surgeon, appointed to Haslar, 19
 *Wallis, Samuel, commissioner, 113, 131-3, 159-60, 180, 182, 237-8
 War, preparation for, 288-99, 353-55; with France, 367
 West Indies, estimated money value of, 59-65
 White, Mr., master shipwright, letter to, 31
 Wilhelmina, Princess, pp. xv, xvi
 William III., King, 241, 324
 William, Prince, commands the Hebe, 135; irregularities of, 136. *See* Clarence, Duke of
 William V., Stadholder of the Netherlands, pp. xii-xiv
 Williams, Sir John, surveyor, 159; superannuation of, 178-9, 183, 190
 Woodley, Frances, afterwards Banks, 145
 Woodley, William, seeks to be governor of the Leeward Islands, 145
- *YONGE, Sir George, secretary for war, 265. Letter from, 264
 York, Duke of, Lord High Admiral, 35, 225, 300
 Young, James, surgeon, praise of, 111-12
 Young, Walter, captain, 112, 119, 121
- ZOUTMAN, Admiral, Dutch, 221

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